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## CLASSIC AND BASIC CASE STUDIES

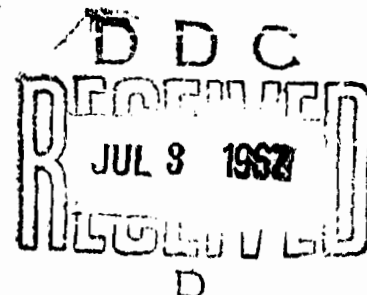
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## ISOLATING THE GUERRILLA

1 February 1966



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## ISOLATING THE GUERRILLA

### Classic and Basic Case Studies (Volume II)

A Report prepared for the Army Research Office  
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Guerrillas in the French Revolution and the  
Napoleonic Era

by

Peter Paret

INTRODUCTION

The French Revolution ushered in a new era of warfare. Tactical innovations, a gradual but a last complete break with former operational and strategic concepts, the replacement of the mercenary by the citizen-soldier--these and other changes increased the potentials of war and made it a vastly more powerful and more destructive instrument of state policy. The revolution in warfare between nations was accompanied by a significant expansion of another type of conflict: armed disputes within the boundaries of a single state. By itself internal war was nothing new. Its various forms punctuate all of history, and there had been two important instances, the American War for Independence and the Corsican insurrection, in the years just preceding 1789, but with the outbreak of the French Revolution these internal struggles acquired a new dynamic. To later generations the irregular wars of this period became classics, to be analyzed, interpreted, and at times emulated. Most important and influential among them were the guerrilla wars in the Vendée, in Spain, and in the Tyrol. Less significant episodes were the German popular resistance to the French in the 1790s and Russian guerrilla activity against the Grande Armée in 1812. All contain characteristics that recur in the insurrections and irregular operations of the 19th and 20th Centuries, and that should be briefly noted here. However, a study concerned with the problem of isolating the guerrilla will find the uprising in the Vendée the most instructive episode and the one deserving the greatest attention.

German resistance to the revolutionary armies in the Rhineland and Russian partisans in 1812 exemplify one type of irregular

warfare: the use of armed civilians to assist regular forces against a foreign invader. In both cases the mobilization of civilians was officially sanctioned and organized, the civilians fought not as independent groups but in closest possible coordination with regular units, and in neither campaign did their efforts carry much weight--though later patriotic historians tried to glorify the civilians' contribution.

In Germany, an Imperial Edict of January 21, 1794, called on the principalities on the east bank of the Rhine to arm their subjects as a last means to repel the French. Several thousand peasants in the Palatinate and along the upper Rhine were formed into partisan bands, and operated in conjunction with light troops against French supply columns and isolated detachments. Their greatest successes were the liberation of a prisoner transport and the capture of a wagon train.

In the Napoleonic invasion of Russia there is no evidence of any but isolated guerrilla action during the first half of the campaign. During the retreat from Moscow, peasant bands supported cossacks and regulars in harassing the French columns, cutting off stragglers, and depriving the French of food and shelter. In neither campaign do the French staff reports reflect particular concern about this form of opposition, and no special means were devised to counter it. In 1794 and 1795, the heyday of revolutionary enthusiasm in the French forces, the French command did distribute leaflets among the German peasants, calling on them not to fight for the aristocrats against the Republic, but little energy was invested in this effort. In general, armed civilians were seen as a strictly military problem, whose most serious implications lay in the area of discipline, since troops were bound to be more than ordinarily ruthless in their dealings with an unreliable population.

Guerrillas in Spain and in the Tyrol were also civilians attempting to repel a foreign invader. But their operations differed in important respects from the conventional use of armed civilians as auxiliaries of regular troops fighting on the defensive in their own country, and each of these episodes exemplifies a distinct kind of guerrilla war.

Spanish guerrillas began as auxiliaries of the regular forces. When these forces collapsed the armed civilians became the carriers of the major Spanish military effort, though in an operational sense they continued to be auxiliaries--now of the British armies under Moore and Wellington. The guerrillas enjoyed encouragement and support from the regime in exile that had been overthrown by the French; their main impetus, however, was not official but came

from their attachment to the monarchy, the church, their national pride and their hatred of the invaders. Since the guerrillas genuinely expressed the sentiment of the overwhelming majority of Spaniards, the French saw little hope of separating them from their popular base. During the years of French occupation, hardly any propaganda was addressed to the peasants and townspeople; the French placed their faith in conventional military countermeasures, strongly laced with terror, in espionage, bribes, and the exploitation of regional differences, jealousies, and aspirations. There can be little doubt that this combination would have sufficed to achieve a reasonable degree of pacification of most of the country, barring certain mountain strongholds, if the guerrillas had been on their own. The real threat to the French presence and the force that finally destroyed it was the British army.

As in Spain so in the Tyrol an entire society resisted military occupation and political change imposed by a foreign power. But here the occupying power did not have to deal with a complex national society, possessing vast material and emotional resources; the Tyrolese were numerically weak, and though their cultural cohesion was great they lacked political and military expertise. Their territory was ideally suited for ambushes and raids; but it was too restricted for extensive maneuvering, or the establishment of sanctuaries, and could be isolated from the rest of the world without much difficulty. Finally, the dominant position of France and the unwillingness of many Austrian leaders to support a popular war meant that the backing of the Austrian government was ambiguous and ineffective. Politically and militarily the Tyrolese fought on their own. The Bavarian occupying forces and their French allies responded to the insurrection with conventional military and police measures. They saw their major task as keeping the road network open, occupying the various towns, and from these centers extending their control over the countryside. Wherever possible, the peasants were induced to concentrate their forces, since pitched battles lent themselves to the tactics of regular troops. Although appeals were made to the Tyrolese to stop fighting, there was little effort to change their views. It was assumed--and rightly as events were to show--that repeated military defeats of the guerrillas would lead to pacification.

The irregular fighting that occurred in Germany, in Spain, the Tyrol, and Russia, did not transgress the essentially conventional character of these operations. In the Rhineland, Spain, and Russia the partisans were adjuncts of the regular forces and fought with official approval. To a varying degree their motives

might be termed ideological; they fought not only because they were ordered to do so, but for a number of patriotic and religious reasons. Their enthusiasm and fanaticism, their failure to obey the rules of war, their readiness to improvise, affected the character of the fighting, made it more ruthless and more destructive of society as a whole. Nevertheless, their opponents felt it unnecessary to depart far from the conventional military and police techniques in their countermeasures. This also holds true of the insurrection in the Tyrol, where the peasants were not officially recognized auxiliaries of regular forces, but a small self-contained society rising up in its entirety. The insurrection in the Vendée, however, was a clash of rival ideologies, a civil war in which both sides resorted to unconventional techniques. Their struggle shows in well-defined form many of the problems that seem constant elements in revolutionary wars today: the importance of propaganda, for instance, and of ideological control of the fighters; the great difficulties of coordinating military with political and psychological measures; the problem of unity of command in a popular movement; the insurgents' need for foreign support; and the need for the legitimate forces to isolate the guerrilla from his popular and economic base and to turn him into an easy target for conventional operations.

The area of the uprising lay along the northwest coast of France. In the north its limit was set by the Loire, flowing from Saumur west past Nantes to the Bay of Biscay; sixty miles to the south it ended along the road connecting the little Atlantic port of Les Sables d'Olonne with Niort. To the west it was limited by the sea, to the east by a line formed by the towns of Saumur, Thouars, and Parthenay. The country lying within this rectangle possesses widely differing characteristics. Near the coast it is flat, marshy, crisscrossed by canals. Farther east the ground rises and becomes wooded; fields and buildings are enclosed by the proliferating hedges that have given this land its name, the Bocage. The river Sevre and two ranges of rocky heights divide the Bocage diagonally from north to south; beyond lie a succession of valleys and arid plateaus which gradually give way to the rich agricultural districts on the eastern limits of the Vendée. To the north the Bocage extends to the valley of the Loire; but here too the country is broken and heavily wooded, with many hedged-in farms and a few small towns which during the 18th Century were centers of the region's modest textile industry. These areas were not only remote from the rest of the French monarchy, but somewhat isolated from each other. In the entire territory no more than two or three highways were reasonably serviceable in all seasons. From administrative and



military, as well as from social and economic, points of view the bad roads proved almost as great a barrier to movement as did the hedges and ditches among which the Vendean peasant isolated himself.

In 1790 about 800,000 people lived in the Vendée, nine-tenths of whom worked on the land. A minority of the peasants owned or leased sufficient property to support themselves comfortably, but most were small tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and day-laborers. At least one-tenth of the rural population was unemployed or only seasonally employed. The economy was less developed than in most other parts of France, and it continued to be hamstrung by special legislation favoring the privileged classes. But despite economic hardship and feudal irritants the relationship between peasants and nobility was generally harmonious. Both shared to a considerable extent a provincial outlook, a love for their region and its traditions, which was often stronger than their attachment to the country as a whole. The very numerous clergy played an important role in reinforcing this social cohesion; throughout the area, the parish priests possessed almost absolute spiritual and intellectual authority. Finally, perhaps 6% of the population could be considered to belong to the middle classes, but their economic power was still undeveloped. They were scattered through the territory, and they hardly yet formed an integrated social class. During the insurrection their allegiance was divided. Many of the middle class were prominent in the Republican National Guard, while only a few led insurgent detachments; on the other hand, many served with the peasant bands as physicians, quartermasters, and in other specialist capacities.

To sum up, the Vendée was populated by an economically and culturally rather backward society. The conflict of interests among its various classes was considerable; but beneath the antagonisms unifying forces continued to flourish. Most significant among these was the peasant's abiding religiosity. Despite all quarrels, a feeling of fellowship continued to unite peasants and nobility, in particular both groups felt deeply suspicious of any central government, whether royalist or republican. The topography of the region, which had helped to isolate its population from new ideas and influences, made the outbreak of the insurrection possible and assured its long duration.

During the first year of the French Revolution, the Vendée in general accepted the great political and social changes emanating from Paris. This receptivity was compromised late in

1790 when the government intensified its attacks on the political powers of the clergy. Priests who refused to swear a special oath of allegiance to the new constitution were dismissed and replaced by more cooperative colleagues; these, however, were not accepted by the peasants, and riots broke out in a number of parishes. Many of the deposed priests hid in the countryside and became fomenters and subsequently leaders of the rebellion. As the relations of the government with the peasants became strained over the religious issue, conditions in other areas also deteriorated. The war was unpopular; unemployment rose; the value of money declined seriously, and the peasants reacted to the decline in value in the classic manner by hoarding their produce. This in turn produced food shortages in the towns, and the government resorted to requisitions, which the peasants resisted. The news of Louis XVI's trial and execution further incensed them, and when in March 1793 the government began to draft men to fight against the First Coalition, the Vendée rose up in open revolt.

A few days after fighting had begun the insurgents controlled nearly all the Vendean countryside, with the government still holding the towns and harbors that surrounded the region. The insurrection now faced a choice between two main courses of action: either an immediate offensive could exploit the weakness of the Republican forces while they were still off balance, extend the rebellion to neighboring regions, and seek contact with other opposition movements and with England. Or the emphasis could be placed on strengthening the defensive potential of the movement by organizing, training, and equipping the dozens of separate peasant bands into fighting units, setting up a command structure with a general staff and commander in chief, and forming an administration to take the place of the murdered or imprisoned Republican officials. On the other hand, the immediate Republican concern should have been the containment of the uprising until a useful military force could be assembled to undertake offensive operations.

Not surprisingly, neither side fully understood its own situation or that of its opponent; but during the early weeks the confusion within Republican leadership did much to assure the continued success of the insurrection. The government at this time was itself in profound crisis; the moderate Republic was being replaced by a revolutionary government, and it required time and much trial and error before the new leaders could impose their own radical methods on the administrative machinery and make it work. Under the circumstances a realistic evaluation of their opponents was impossible; faith in the revolution demanded the belief that the brigands in the Vendée would vanish before the

bayonets of the National Guard; reverses could be explained only as treason. But even more objective men would have found it difficult to refuse the call for help from patriots in isolated towns and to resist the pressures from rivals and critics for an immediate stamping out of the disorders. Small detachments were therefore pushed into insurgent territory, only to be ambushed or overwhelmed by greatly superior numbers. Larger units followed to meet with the same fate. By the middle of May, six weeks after the outbreak of fighting, the insurgents had not only repulsed the armies sent against them, inflicted thousands of casualties and captured weapons and equipment: necessary for maintaining large forces in the field, they had also broken two links in the chain of Republican strongpoints that encircled them.

But these achievements could not make up for two serious omissions: the military momentum had not been followed up by spreading the insurrection to other parts of the country, and remarkably little had been done to strengthen its base. Responsibility for both failures rested fundamentally with the lack of unity among the Vendean command. The chiefs who emerged out of the confusion of the early fighting varied greatly in background and purpose. Some were peasants or artisans, others former gendarmes; a few had been smugglers; many were nobles who had opposed the Revolution from the beginning, while a number of their peers had acquiesced in the new order but were chosen or even compelled by their former feudal dependents to assume command. The disparity in the motives for fighting was equally great. The peasants and many of the subordinate chiefs had taken up arms to defend the church and to rid themselves of revolutionary conscription, taxes, and forced contributions. Most of the aristocratic leaders, on the contrary, were primarily concerned with the reestablishment of the monarchy. These and other differences handicapped continuity and large-scale operations. Finally, personal ambition and jealousy permitted neither the election of an effective supreme commander nor the achievement of lasting cooperation among the chiefs.

Of the more than 60,000 men in the Vendean forces, about one-seventh were permanently under arms. Apart from providing the core of the infantry, the permanent cadres formed most of the small cavalry, the artillery, the quartermasters, the messengers, and medics. The other 50,000 to 55,000 effectives worked on their farms until the regional commander issued an order to muster, which was transmitted from parish to parish by the sounding of church-bells. Forced recruitment played an increasingly important part as the war went on. But it also happened that parishes or entire districts refused to heed the order for a



rassemblement, either from a feeling that there had been enough fighting for a while or because farmwork needed to be done.

During his short periods of service in the field the Vendean did not turn into a soldier but remained an armed civilian, with his own ideas about the war and an innate resistance to any kind of conformity imposed from above. Only a few ever acquired uniforms. Most wore civilian clothes or the captured Republican blue, marked with a cockade or sash in white--the royal color--or possibly a patch showing a crucifix or the sacred heart. Discipline was a weak reed for any of their chiefs to rely on. The campaigns afford numerous examples of looting, indiscriminate destruction, and the killing of prisoners in the face of contrary orders, although, to be sure, in other cases the same things were done as part of an implicit policy of terror or retaliation. With the absence of uniforms and of exact obedience went an almost total lack of drill. Movements in close order and firing by volleys were sometimes attempted, but never with great effect. The Vendean followed most readily, and most successfully, those chiefs who understood their particular qualities and tried to exploit rather than change them. On the whole they were better marksmen than the Republican infantry, and individual sniping in any case made for greater accuracy than firing by command. Their use of the terrain, too, was almost always superior. They were masters of what the military writers of the time called the petite guerre, or the guerre de détachements: irregular warfare waged by small groups, moving rapidly through the thickly wooded, obstructed country to blow up a bridge far behind enemy lines, ambush a supply column, or overwhelm an isolated post.

When it came to large-scale encounters, the Vendean sought to combine the methods of guerrilla fighting and sometimes of terror--for instance, in attacking behind a screen of Republican prisoners--with the employment of the numbers and cohesion required for battle. Often they started with the inestimable advantage of knowing the opponent's position while masking their own.

The great art of the rebels /as one of the ablest of Republican leaders, General Kléber, wrote at the time/ lies in constantly sending out cavalry and infantry patrols in every direction from their main force. The cavalry range twelve, sixteen, twenty, even as far as twenty-four kilometers, while behind them the foot-soldiers carry off all the supplies they can find. In this manner the mounted detachments spread fear throughout the area without it being possible to discover the

exact route by which the main force will follow, and this is why there have been so many vague and uncertain reports about the enemy. It must be acknowledged that here the enemy has always enjoyed a great ascendancy over us.

By the end of May the government no longer discounted the seriousness of the insurrection. But while the Republic was fighting Austria, Prussia, and England, the Vendée continued to be a minor theater of war. The government felt unable to detach more than 60,000 effectives--mainly National Guards and second-line troops--for the purpose of bringing the rebellion under control and for political reasons refused to entrust this force to a single supreme commander. To assure the loyalty of their military leaders, civilian commissioners were sent from Paris, and these political agents were joined by "deputies on mission" to maintain more secure civilian control over the operations. Sent to the provinces to organize the new revolutionary government, their power over the army has been described as "omnipotent in all that concerned recruitment, weapons, munitions, requisitions, the appointment and dismissal of officials, the dismissal of generals. They were to set examples of courage and patriotism, to encourage loyal administrations, replace the others, and supervise the sale of émigré property." This last touches on a further function: they played a significant part in the formulation and execution of nonmilitary measures to end the rebellion.

On March 19, in its first rage against the insurgents, the Convention had passed a law stipulating the death penalty for all rebel leaders and soldiers, for everyone who opposed recruitment, or who was captured bearing arms or showing the white cockade. The property of the executed was to be confiscated by the state. The totality and harshness of this conception were unique. Possibly, rather than actually to be carried out, the law was intended to demonstrate the government's determination and to frighten the Vendéans into submission; but although its provisions were not yet generally applied, they gave a free hand to any senior commander or official.

A more conciliatory attitude largely inspired by Danton briefly gained ascendancy during April and May. On May 7 the deputies on mission in the West were instructed that their "first and most pressing duty is to contribute with all their might to the enlightenment of the misguided citizens; to scatter the rebels, to punish the brigands, the chiefs of the mutineers, and to return to the nation those citizens lost to her through

seduction, ignorance, and prejudices." Three days later a decree amended the law of March 19 to apply only to the leaders and instigators of the revolt. This was followed by an appeal of the Convention to the insurgents, phrased in the same conciliatory spirit but hardly proffering arguments that would sway the peasants. After enumerating the benefits brought to the Vendée by the Revolution and condemning the monarchy as tyrannical and unpatriotic, the proclamation continued:

You want to retain your religion. But who has tried to rob you of it, to trouble your consciences? Have you been asked to change anything in your beliefs, in the ceremonies of your worship? No; you have been deprived of those men whom you regarded as the only legitimate priests; but haven't they justified this necessary harshness by their own conduct? Are these men, who today preach murder and pillage, the real ministers of a peace-loving God, or are they vile satellites of despots risen against your country? . . .

Those priests who call themselves the only true Catholics are paid by the gold of Protestant England. Does England squander money to avenge a religion which she herself persecutes and despises? No, but so that France will lacerate herself with her own hands; if your blood flows for the cause of slavery and ours for the cause of liberty, it is still French blood.

Renounce these shameful errors. Abandon to the sword of the law that vile pack of insolent slaves, of hypocritical priests, who have turned you into abused agents of their venal wickedness. . . . Show yourself again worthy of assuming the name of Frenchmen! Then you will find none but brothers in the whole Republic, which now is regretfully arming herself to punish you, which--ready to crush you with all her might--will weep over successes gained at the cost of your blood.

If scruples still trouble your consciences, remember that religious freedom is one of the necessary conditions of a Republican constitution.

As can be seen, the proclamation committed the not uncommon propaganda error of expressing its authors' convictions rather than successfully playing on the feelings of its audience. Only the explicit promise that if they surrendered the mass of the insurgents would not be punished could have had real effect. The accusation of Protestant and English support, which might be supposed to touch Vendean prejudices, lacked all supporting evidence,

and indeed at this time not so much as a British penny or musket had reached the rebels. Besides, any advantage derived from raising this bogey must have been more than canceled out by the virulent attacks on the clergy, whose influence had in no way diminished since the outbreak of fighting. As it had in the past, the government continued to misjudge the nature and intensity of the people's religious beliefs. Never would the Vendéans freely accept a Catholic church purified according to Republican principles; they wanted no intermediary between themselves and their priests, and the assurance of religious toleration must have sounded to their ears like blasphemous derision. Patriotism, finally, which meant so much to the deputies in Paris, had not yet reached a sufficient stage of development among the peasants to prove a useful target for propaganda. The Convention saw only the national union, which inexplicably had been disrupted; the Vendéans, a godless and hypocritical interference in their lives. It needed more than an offer of clemency to bridge the emotional gap between the two sides.

Throughout the summer of 1793 the Vendéans gained a series of victories over the disjointed Republican forces, but the unwillingness of the peasants to leave their farms for extended periods of time and disagreement among the chiefs on what the next move ought to be enabled the government gradually to mobilize sufficient resources. In August a corps of well-trained and experienced soldiers, the 12,000 veterans of the Army of Mayence, was for the first time sent against the Vendée. Simultaneously with their dispatch to the West, the Convention repealed the moderate punitive laws of May; for a time some hope of conciliation had been held out, but now the rebels were again to be terrorized into submission.

If the Committee of Public Safety too often discounted professional expertise, its members at least thoroughly understood the need for intermingling political and military measures in revolutionary warfare. In truly remarkable fashion the decree of August 1 indicated the whole range of weapons that the revolution was preparing to launch against the internal enemy in the West. Its first paragraph ordered the army of Mayence to be transported to the Vendée. Article II called for political purges of the staffs and civilian employees of the Republican army, and Article III for the rigorous execution of the laws against deserters and traitors. Articles IV and V ordered the formation of engineer, rifle, and light-infantry companies. Articles VI and VII dealt with the shipment of combustible materials to assist in the destruction of hedges, woods, and forests, and ordered that the crops and animals of rebels be seized.

Article VIII called for expulsion from the Vendée of all women, children, and sick relatives of insurgents. Articles IX, XI, XII, and XV concerned matters of army organization and the communication of the decree. Article X ordered a levée en masse of the population in the neighboring department. Article XIII demanded that only patriotic expressions and the names of dead Republicans or of martyrs to the cause of liberty be chosen as passwords; and Article XIV ordered the confiscation of all rebel property. The right of executing captured Vendéans without trial was several times reaffirmed in succeeding months. In the conflict with the Vendée, as elsewhere in France, terror had become part of acknowledged policy.

The army of Mayence reached the west in the last days of August. On September 2 a council of war of the senior generals and deputies on mission agreed on a new plan of operations, which attempted to draw the best possible advantage from the newly arrived regulars. The National Guard and Volunteer units were to operate in active defense along the boundaries of the Vendée, while the regulars, formed in several mutually supporting columns attacked the center of the territory from several directions. By the middle of September they had penetrated deeply into the Bocage. Once more the peasants mobilized their full strength and in three battles were able to ambush, defeat, and maul the regulars; but again they failed to follow up their victories, and the government forces reorganized and continued their slow and costly advance to the heart of the insurrection. On October 17 at the battle of Cholet the Vendean armies were fixed and totally defeated. A remnant, joined by thousands of old men, women, and children, crossed the Loire and for two months maintained itself in Brittany, hoping to contact an English squadron sent for their support, but on December 23 they were caught and annihilated. Only small groups of survivors found their way back to the Vendée.

The Vendean armies were destroyed, but would military victory mean the end of the war? The evidence of history and Clausewitz's famous dictum to the contrary, men generally find it difficult not to succumb to the temptation of drawing a rigid line between war and peace, as though the two were absolute opposites rather than contiguous and overlapping areas in the relations between individuals, parties, and states. Nowhere is this intermixture so clearly evident as in the beginning and terminating stages of internal conflicts. The defeat of the organized forces of one or the other side leaves behind armed enemy remnants, lawlessness, and a vacuum of social disorder which the victorious power must fill by both military and nonmilitary



means. Even more important than the need to punish and reorganize is the problem of convincing the opposition--which, as in the Vendée, may make up a great part of the population--that it should again acquiesce in the legal order.

In the Vendée these tasks were rendered more difficult by two factors that had marked the insurrection from its beginnings. France was engaged in fighting a foreign alliance, which heightened the danger created by dissensions at home and the intensity of emotion and reaction they engendered. Unrest within the country could not be isolated from the external conflict. At every opportunity dissension was promoted and exploited by the allies; certainly without English support active anti-Republicanism in the west would have subsided far earlier than in the event it did. Of equal importance was the fact that the revolution had not yet run its course. On the contrary, the campaign north of the Loire and the months of pacification that followed coincided with the climax of radicalism, the supremacy of the terror in Paris. It could hardly be expected that the revolution would treat its opponents with the degree of tolerance that is possible to more stable governments.

The purely military part of pacification appeared relatively simple. The insurgents had suffered too greatly physically and morally to allow any further organized resistance for the time being. Only a few chiefs retained their independence, and their operations did not amount to more than guerrilla actions and uncoordinated raids, which kept the Republican forces busy but caused no real damage.

The lack of equipment became increasingly serious. In the past the Vendéans had been able to arm themselves wholly from captured Republican stores; now they were too weak to risk a large-scale engagement, and the only possibility of reequipping their cadres and of arming recruits lay in assistance from overseas. Several British vessels actually landed muskets and powder. The Vendean's insufficient popular support even led them to request foreign regulars, a point they had always shied away from during the period of their ascendancy. Slowly the scheme of landing a strong expeditionary corps took hold, but over the preparations the year passed.

If the Vendée no longer presented a serious military threat, what of its general attitude toward the Republic? Certain developments suggested that the bulk of the insurgents--that is, the peasantry--had lost much of its former resolve to carry on the struggle against the revolution. Already in early October 1793 a slackening of resistance had been noted, and the disasters of the

following two months could not but help to deepen this defeatism. The smashing of the rebels' civil and military structure, furthermore, lifted the restraint that had lain over the villages. As the repeated failures of musters showed, it was no longer as easy as it once had been to compel people to take up arms. On this general weariness and wish for peace, a policy of conciliation might be built which would gradually reintegrate the insurgents into the nation. The essential conditions of such a policy were on the one hand for the government to show some sympathy with the religious aspirations of the country population--or at least to refrain from carrying out wholesale punishments--and on the other to protect the people from the counterrevolutionary die-hards, who continued to maintain themselves precariously in the Bocage.

A plan to answer both requirements had been worked out by Kleber in the days after the victory of Cholet. The main military effort, he suggested, should be directed toward preventing musters which might increase the guerrilla bands and seeing to it that no stores or equipment fell into their hands. This Kleber proposed to accomplish by stationing garrisons in the Bocage; setting up strongpoints at road junctions, river crossings, and important heights, which were to serve as bases for small mobile columns that would traverse the countryside; engage groups of insurgents; collect arms; and re-establish security. "An essential objective," he wrote, ". . . is to cut off the enemy's supplies, to disturb and harass him without let-up; but above all we must win the confidence of the country population. . . . Let us immediately attack the known rassemblements, let us destroy them, let us protect the country, and all will return to order."

This plan of conciliation, however, was never seriously considered by the government; no attempts were made to gain the peasants' confidence, to differentiate between leaders and followers; instead the Vendée was to be treated as conquered territory. At the end of 1793 a new group of deputies was sent to the west to purge, execute, and confiscate. At the same time a new general-in-chief was appointed, Turreau, a professional of no marked political convictions who, if he held any ideas on the war that differed from the radical view, was careful not to let them influence his actions. Under him the army of the west became for some months the impassive instrument of the Convention's declared policy of extermination.

Turreau based his operations on a program consisting of 15 main points:

1. Prevent the Vendéans from receiving any assistance from foreign countries.

2. Cut all their communications with subversive groups elsewhere.

3. Remove from the insurgent territory all inhabitants who had not taken up arms, because some, under the guise of neutrality, favor the rebels, while the others (the smaller group), although loyal to the Republic, also provide assistance which they cannot refuse in the face of compulsion.

4. Remove from the interior of the Vendée all animals, all foodstuffs, all means of subsistence, and evacuate all military posts.

5. Destroy the rebel hide-outs, and in general all places that might offer them cover and resources.

6. Surround the entire theater of war south of the Loire first by posts located at the main towns of the perimeter, and later, when the warm season returns, by fortified camps.

7. Traverse the Vendée in all directions by columns which pursue the rebels without let-up, destroy their hide-outs, and protect the removal of supplies.

/8-12, and 14, give details of the military arrangements./

13. Post 24 cannon-boats on the Loire to control and guard navigation, and to inspect the buildings on the riverbanks, and particularly the bridges.

15. Disarm all communities adjacent to the theater of war, because the enemy could begin new insurrections there, could rob patriots of their weapons and ammunition, or receive them from inhabitants attached to the royalist party.

Despite the misgivings of several of his subordinates at the extent of these measures, Turreau wasted little time in putting his plan into effect. During the last week of January, 12 mobile columns--soon known to everyone, Republican or royalist, as colonnes infernales--crossed the Vendée from east to west. Their commanders had orders to ". . . use all measures to discover the rebels, all are to be killed. Villages, farms, woods, heaths, brush, and in general all things that can be burned are to be



delivered to the flames. . . . To facilitate the operations, the general places 40 to 50 pioneers or laborers at the head of his column, who do the felling in woods and forests necessary for spreading the fire." The order concluded with a list of 13 of the largest towns in the Vendée that were exempted from burning.

The first promenade of the colonnes infernales was soon followed by others, and until June the columns remained active. The amount of destruction they visited on the country has never been accurately established. Some of it properly came under the heading of military necessity, such as the leveling of hedges to widen the roads, or at any rate was difficult to avoid when contending with snipers and a frightened, hostile populace. But by far the greater part was deliberately punitive. One general reported:

For the good of the Republic Les Echaubrognes [a bourg three miles from Cholet] no longer exists, not a single house remains. Six murdered volunteers were found, as well as muskets and ammunition. Nothing has escaped the vengeance of the nation; at the moment of writing I am having fourteen women shot who were denounced to me. Yesterday I burnt every mill that I could see . . . today I can burn three-quarters of this town [Maulevrier] without risk, it's not necessary to have such a large place for [quartering] a detachment of 200 men. . . . In a tree-trunk two soldiers found a priest; I had him shot. . . .

Attached to the columns were agents of the specially formed Commission civile et administrative, charged with the confiscation and evacuation of crops, animals, and other goods. Until it was suppressed in September 1794 in the course of the Thermidorean reaction, the commission by its own account confiscated 46,694 farm animals, 153,000 hundredweights of grain, hay, and straw, 111,000 pounds of various metals, and a vast catalogue of other items, down to 50 children's shirts.

Two further tasks of the columns were the evacuation of insurgent families and--of more immediate importance--the disarming of the Vendéans. Since sizable engagements with their attendant loss of equipment were becoming more and more infrequent, the authorities held out pardons to individual rebels who would surrender their arms. These appeals were heeded by thousands, very many of whom--according to a score of Republican witnesses--were then executed.

These measures--execution, resettlement, destruction, and appropriation--were directed at rebels and rebel sympathizers, but to a lesser degree they also affected the inhabitants who had remained loyal to the Republic. National Guards that had opposed the rebel armies for a year were now disbanded, thus making the communities in the interior defenseless. These were in any case to be destroyed and the citizens evacuated to other departments, so that, as one decree explained, "none but rebels will remain in the insurgent territory, who then can be destroyed more easily, without confusing them with innocent citizens." The expulsion of patriots, with all the emotional and economic deprivation such moves entail, began on March 28 and continued until the end of May.

The savagery of this program aroused violent opposition even among government supporters, while corrupting and demoralizing the troops charged with carrying it into effect. But the most serious consequence of the radical policy proved to be the reaction it caused among the Vendean peasants. Extreme repression can hardly be expected to induce willing cooperation. On the contrary, the terror reawakened the desire for resistance among the population. Those few armed bands that still maintained themselves in the woods almost doubled in size during the spring of 1794 as new recruits joined them from the devastated villages and farms.

By the end of spring the failure of the repressive system could no longer be ignored. In particular the extent of economic destruction and of indiscipline among the troops convinced the government that a change was needed, and Paris reverted to the former course of punishing only the chiefs and instigators of rebellion. More moderate deputies were sent to the area, military commanders were given a free hand, the refugees were recalled, the colonnes infernales were disbanded, and the confiscation of grain and animals ceased. The new methods reverted to Kleber's proposals: the insurrection had to be isolated, its armed forces defeated, and the people won back to the Republican cause. The radicals had tried to empty the Vendée, to create a vacuum in which their soldiers could safely operate. The new commanders, on the contrary, covered the territory with a grid of fixed points--fortified camps, posts, and guards--between which mobile detachments sought out the rebel bands. Within this security system the population could regain the ways of peaceful existence, while the insurgents were deprived of moral and physical sustenance, and gradually hunted down.

By December 1794 this plan had succeeded to such an extent that the Republicans felt secure enough to proclaim an amnesty

that granted an immediate pardon to all rebels--chiefs as well as followers--who surrendered their arms. This time the promise of clemency was kept, and the insurgent commanders could no longer hold their bands together. Negotiations were opened between the Republic and the remaining rebel chiefs, which led to an armistice, and on February 17, 1795, to a formal treaty that granted the Vendéans freedom from conscription, the free exercise of their faith, and some restitution and indemnities for losses suffered during the war. The mass of insurgents had been conceded their strongest wishes; but never were the differences between leaders and followers more obvious than now. While the peasants willingly accepted the settlement and returned to their farms, the royalist chiefs submitted only out of weakness and to gain time. The long-awaited English expedition, they knew, was near at hand, and with its support they might hope to raise the entire west against the Republic. These plans were aided by their continued possession of some military power. As part of the reintegration of the bands into society, the Republican negotiators had authorized the establishment of a "territorial guard" under the control of the chiefs. This force, numbering about 4,000 men, served as a legitimate means of maintaining the old cadres under arms and could be used to trigger off a new uprising. On June 25, one chief successfully attacked a Republican camp in the Bocage, after which he issued a proclamation declaring that the insurgents had "taken up arms again and renewed their irrefutable oath not to lay them down until the heir presumptive to the French crown had ascended the throne of our fathers. . . ."

The day after this coup, a British fleet landed a force of 4,500 French émigrés at Quiberon, 60 miles north of Nantes, where thousands of Breton guerrillas awaited them. The presence on French soil of well-equipped regulars, with the assurance of reinforcement, supported by a large and militarily active part of the population, could have developed into a serious threat to the Republic. But again the contradictions inherent in every Bourbon attempt to wage a popular war proved fatal. Even before debarkation, rivalry among the émigré commanders wasted invaluable hours, and this initial handicap was heightened by disagreements which quickly appeared between émigrés and peasants. Few of the returning nobles were ready to overcome their pride of caste, to consider the peasants real soldiers, to accept the social and military conditions of partisan warfare. While the leaders attempted to bring some cohesion to their operations, the Republic was given time to concentrate superior forces against the invasion, which it was soon able to contain. On July 20 government forces attacked the beachhead, which in the meantime had been reinforced by a

second squadron from Jersey, and destroyed the Anglo-émigré army. Only 900 émigrés and 1,400 guerrillas with some civilian sympathizers were able to save themselves on the British vessels. In early fall another attempt to land in the Vendée ended ignominiously, and the insurgents were again left to their own devices.

The end of the long struggle was clearly at hand. By the middle of 1796 all armed bands had been mopped up, the countryside had been pacified, and the population had come to accept the inevitability of Republican rule. Of the approximately 800,000 inhabitants of the region, approximately 160,000 had perished during the struggle.

Upper Burma, 1885-1890

by

Frank H. Brooke

GENERAL BACKGROUND AND TERRAIN

To call a Burman a Burmese  
Is hardly likely to please.  
He may be a Chin, Karen or Kachin  
Or even an Arakanese!

Bernard Fergusson's light-hearted jingle goes to the heart of the matter, though he could have added the Shans and the Mons to his list of ethnic groups.\* Burma has always been conscious of her variety of peoples, many of them capable of clear subdivision by language and custom as well as habitat.

Burma, in area, is slightly smaller than the State of Texas (or it may be more tactful to say that Texas is slightly bigger than Burma), rather elongated in shape from north to south, and over 1,000 miles long with an average width of 400 miles. A horseshoe-shaped ring of mountains and hills surrounds the country, and forms a natural land frontier, with the Bay of Bengal on the south and southwest. The rivers run from north to south, with the Irrawaddy and its tributary the Chindwin to the west, the Sittang in the center, and the Salween to the east. Though only the Irrawaddy is navigable, the river valleys and the natural line of communication throughout the country and, being cultivable, are the main areas of population. In the north, the mountain areas are heavily forested with jungle on the lower slopes and in the foothills. Jungle areas cover large tracts in

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\*As a point of scholarly American usage, the word "Burmese" denotes a citizen of Burma, and "Burman" a member of the majority ethnic group. As the quoted poem shows, however, British usage is different, which causes a certain amount of confusion.

the plains and the Arakan and Pegu Yoma (hills) between the river basins. The Shan States to the east are largely grassland at altitudes between 2,000 and 4,000 feet, with the River Salween running through a series of deep, rocky gorges.

Some 200 miles from the sea, the Irrawaddy forms its delta--a large, fertile area intersected by branches of the main river and a number of canals. To the southeast, the Province of Tenasserim is a long strip, the frontier with Thailand following the line of the watershed.

The climate is tropical with a heavy rainfall--ranging from about 200 inches in some hill areas to about 85 inches in the delta--in the regular monsoon period, May to September. The monsoon varies less than in India, but droughts occur occasionally in the north and center of the country, and the so-called "dry zone" has a rainfall of only 30 inches. The soil is alluvial and generally fertile, permitting widespread cultivation of the staple food--rice. In the hilly regions rice is grown by cutting and burning forest tracts, leading to a wasteful and nomadic cultivation, and here it is a matter of subsistence farming for the hill tribes. In the plains, however, much of the land has been for centuries under irrigation and natural flooding, with the result that it has been a surplus food producing area throughout recorded history.

The population in the historical past is not known accurately, but at the beginning of the 19th Century it was probably about 4,000,000. It increased rapidly during the century, reaching about 23,000,000 at the present day. The Burmans form a large majority of the population--three-quarters of the whole. The Karens, the Chins, and the Kachins--the other three main racial groups--share the same ethnic origin, but developed their separate existences largely in the northern semicircle of hills. The Shans maintained their identity to the east, sharing many characteristics with their neighbors the Thais (both are Thais in ethnic origin).

#### EARLY HISTORY

The story of Burma is one of turbulence and war, with the true Burmans establishing their ascendancy nearly 1,000 years ago. In the course of time they subdued the other races by fire and sword--particularly the Mons who were almost annihilated and then absorbed. The Shans paid tribute, and the hill races were, broadly speaking, kept in the hills. Burman civilization was

centered in the Irrawaddy and Pegu areas, roughly in the center of the country.

The Alaungpaya dynasty established a strong and ruthless central authority at Ava, near Mandalay, and in the 19th Century its policy was one of expansion. Wars were launched against the Arakan and against the Shan chieftains to the east. An invasion of Assam, the war against the Mons (resulting in the capture of Pegu and Rangoon) and a punitive expedition against Manipur were among the events of this time.

Burma's threats to Bengal in her imperialist expansion brought her up against the British East India Company which had only recently dealt with its French rivals. In fact, Britain and Burma engaged in an imperialist conflict and a struggle was inevitable. The war which followed in 1824 resulted in the cession of Arakan and Tenasserim to the British, and the war of 1852 (known as the Second Burmese War) added the Province of Pegu to British Burma. In the ensuing 30 years the British administration was consolidated in Lower Burma, consisting largely of the three maritime provinces extending northward to Prome and Toungoo.

The newly annexed province was hardly peaceful for the first three years, with a stubborn resistance movement headed by local leaders helped by raids across the frontier from Upper Burma. Eventually it was pacified, and general prosperity prevailed.

In Upper Burma the Alaungpaya dynasty ruled from Ava. After a series of palace revolutions (the succession to the Peacock Throne has been described as hereditary tempered by assassination) King Mindon began his long reign. A sincere Buddhist, he hated bloodshed and strove to maintain friendly relations with the British and so preserve his independence (he even hoped for the return of the lost province of Pegu). His administration was carried out in the countryside by "myosas"--semifeudal local territorial chiefs, some hereditary and some appointed--ruling through the headmen (myothugis) of "circles," which can be defined as groups of villages. Buddhism's influence was powerful and ubiquitous, with monasteries in or near most of the villages and townships. All Burmese were Buddhists, and it is an odd contradiction that sincere followers of that peaceful religion should have been so much given to violence, bloodshed, and gross cruelty. The hill races, the Chins, Karens, and Kachins, were generally not Buddhists, but Animists. A few had been converted to Christianity by European missionaries, but at this time their number was not great, though increasing.



During the 30 years following the war of 1852, considerable efforts were made to increase trade between British Burma and Upper Burma and to extend trade with China. The old quest for an overland route to Unnan was revived. In the meantime, the French were expanding their empire in Indochina and also attempting to get the major share of the increasing trade. They made themselves masters of Tongking, "the key to China." (One of their main outposts near the frontier was in a village named Dien Bien Phu.) Their intrigues with the Court of Ava were the prime cause of the Third Burmese War.

### THE WAR OF 1885

The "good King" Mindon died in 1878, without nominating a successor, though he suggested that three of his sons should rule jointly. This was hardly likely to work out successfully, and a series of palace intrigues brought Thibaw to the throne. He was completely dominated by his wife, Supayalat. Her nominees became his ministers, and a reign of terror culminated in the cold-blooded massacre of 80 of the king's relations. This event produced a strong reaction in British circles, and Anglo-Burmese relations steadily deteriorated. A dispute over Manipur and the Kabaw Valley worsened affairs considerably.

Internally, Upper Burma was disturbed. Dacoity (armed robbery by gangs) became rife, the hill-dwelling Kachins rebelled against Thibaw's authority, Chinese guerrillas sacked Bhamo, and most of the Shan Sawbwas (feudal princes) renounced their allegiance to the king. Thibaw decided on closer ties with the French, which was encouraged in Paris. (This was the time of intense Franco-British rivalry in Asia.) A French consul arrived in Mandalay, and it was clear that large-scale concessions to the French were in the air. These included the prospect of the supply of arms to Thibaw overland from Tongking. In the event, the French modified their policy, but it was too late. Thibaw was committed to his policy of hostility to the British, and the Burmese treatment of a British timber company became the final casus belli.

### Military Operations

The British general commanding in Rangoon had said earlier that he could take Mandalay with 500 men but would need 10 times that number to pacify Upper Burma. Events proved him right, though his factor of 10 became nearly 60.



The operations against Mandalay carried out by General Prendergast with a mixed force of British and Indian troops were completely successful. Within 24 hours the city had surrendered, and King Thibaw capitulated on November 28, 1885. He and his queen went into exile, but his army refused to surrender and carried on widespread guerrilla warfare for five years. The local myothugis (most of them with a military background in any case) led the resistance by scattered bands all over the country, while five royal princes--all claiming the throne--held out in different areas.

The insurgents consisted partly of soldiers mobilized for the war under the existing semifeudal system, and partly of the dacoit gangs which had always infested Burma. Most were well armed and mobile, depending for support on the villagers and obtaining it by terror. The cruel methods used by the guerrillas ranged from the burning of villages and the massacre of their inhabitants to the torture and crucifixion of selected victims. The policy of terror, while it served its purpose of obtaining supplies at the time, undoubtedly helped the British forces in the long run. As successive districts were cleared of guerrillas and civil administration became effective, the British could count on local support from the indigenous population to a growing extent. Incidentally the official history of the war draws a distinction, by implication at any rate, between "insurgents" and "dacoits." Both were pursued with equal energy and it seems that the term "insurgents" was used for the larger groups of about 300 guerrillas.

The actual number of guerrillas operating at any one time is difficult to determine, but it clearly varied greatly, with some areas quiescent for considerable periods during which the guerrillas resorted to productive enterprise. In many cases the guerrilla bands raided other areas for supplies of food. Isolated British garrisons were often attacked with the aim of obtaining arms and ammunition, apart, of course, from the patriotic motive. There were also, as in the case of so many partisan movements in World War II, the incentives of settling old scores and of gaining a favorable position (from the political point of view) at the war's end.

There was little overall coordination except when one of the major guerrilla leaders (e.g., one of the princes with pretensions to the throne) managed to collect a number of scattered groups for a specific purpose. It appears that the maximum size of any one force under one leader was about 2,000 men, but this was rare, and a guerrilla group of 300 or 400 men was more usual.

### The British Reaction

It has been realized beforehand that the capture of Mandalay would be only the first step, and the plans for the next phase included troop reinforcements, arrangements for effective civil administration, and the raising of an armed police force. The guerrilla actions early in 1886 (Mandalay had fallen in November 1885) were so violent that even larger forces had to be brought in. The total strength of the Regular troops engaged rose to 32,000 all arms, with 8,500 armed police in support.

This force was organized in six brigades (each commanded by a brigadier-general) with two major-generals commanding divisions. Each brigade consisted of cavalry, artillery, engineers, and infantry units, with logistic support. The strength of each brigade varied in accordance with its tasks and the size of the district allotted to it. In each brigade district there were subordinate commands on a geographical basis with a township or village as its center. Each garrison operated one or more mobile columns. The strength of these columns also varied considerably in accordance with the situation prevailing in the area; but generally they could be described as of "company group" size with all arms represented as necessary.

Cavalry were found so useful in enhancing mobility that not only were regiments brought specially from India and elsewhere, but mounted infantry contingents were raised in large numbers. Often they remained with and operated with their parent regiments of British or Indian infantry. Horses were brought from England, India, and Australia, and an interesting fact here is that the moral effect of the "gigantic" horses (the Burmese never having seen anything bigger than their own tiny 12 hand ponies) was overwhelming. Many successful mounted charges were made when the guerrillas were caught in the open or surprised in a village.

Artillery was used extensively against insurgents in stockaded camps or when entrenched, firing over open sights with plain shell. Guns were generally decentralized in sections (or pairs) to the columns, so as to be available at any time. The Royal Navy provided some artillery support and also operated on the Irrawaddy with steam launches.

The military engineers provided signal communications on an extensive scale, combining telegraphic and visual signalling in a highly effective manner. They also improved road communications and built bridges. The country was intersected, even in jungle

areas, by many tracks and bridle paths, connecting the scattered villages. By widening these or cutting new roads, the mobility of the armed forces was vastly improved, even if the infantry still had to march and the other arms remained dependent on packhorses.

An early aim of the British was the establishment of civil administration in the pacified areas. To this end, a Chief Commissioner from Upper Burma was appointed at the outset with headquarters in Mandalay and Deputy Commissioners to the various districts. In 1886 it is recorded in the official history that, under the joint authority of the Chief Commissioner and the commander in chief, meetings of civil and military officers were to take place to decide policy and priorities. This is clearly the forerunner of the War Executive Committee system developed in Malaya 60 years later.

The Chief Commissioner hoped to work, in the first place, through King Thibaw's loose but fairly effective administrative machine, but the king's discredited and unreliable officials were hardly any use under the existing conditions. So government was carried out through the Deputy Commissioners, who in turn made use of any reliable local leaders and organized their districts using the traditional "circle" system. Later, the civil administration was reorganized on the Indian pattern, making the village the subdivision, but this was probably a mistake. As districts were cleared of insurgents and dacoits, the local population and its leaders gained confidence, and it was possible to distribute some of the confiscated weapons for the self-defense of small communities. Here again there is a parallel with the Home Guard raised in Malayan townships and villages in 1950 and the earlier arming there of intrinsically loyal villages, very much on the pattern of the "strategic hamlets" in South Vietnam today.

The police were recruited largely from India, as Burmese were considered to be unreliable in the context. The police recruits were often ex-soldiers of the Indian army, including Gurkhas, and organized on paramilitary lines in battalions. They became an efficient force and were able, as operations progressed, to take over districts from the soldiers who were then able to concentrate for operations against the insurgent areas.

### The Pattern of Operations

Things did not go well for the British forces from early in 1886, and Lord Roberts--then Commander in Chief in India--moved his headquarters to Burma to take personal command of the forces engaged. The raids by the insurgents were widespread and destructive enough to question the credibility of the annexation. The small-scale actions are perfectly described in one of Rudyard Kipling's verses of the time:

A Snider squibbed in the jungle,  
Somebody laughed and fled,  
And the men of the First Shikaris  
Picked up their subaltern dead,  
With a big blue mark on his forehead  
And the back blown out of his head.

The actions of the time are best conveyed by another quotation, this, from the official history, being an extract from a report to a superior officer on the activities of a noted insurgent leader, Hla U:

Lieutenant Holland submits an account of Hla U and his mode of living. He appears to have had two main resorts from whence he carried out his raids in the Myinmu District, viz Magyioke in the north and Kyauk-tat in the south. As regards the latter, his power extended to sixteen neighbouring villages, where he has always had willing followers. Some of them have been specially ready to assist him, acting as his agents in cattle-lifting and supplying him with food, while at Kyauk-tat. At present he never remains on any one spot for more than 12 hours; and, if possible, he never stops in any place we have visited or know of. His camps, though formed in places difficult of access, have always an easy outlet of escape; they have without exception an unfailing supply of water. Both Hla U and his men are wary in the extreme, have an excellent system of outposts, and a method of dispersing and re-assembling which is marvellous. Lieutenant Holland considers that troops are unequal to the task of taking him.

Lieutenant Holland (and his is a typical case) need not have been so pessimistic in his conclusion, because two months later Hla U was found dead. He had been killed by his own men, perhaps mainly because of the constant pressure and pursuit by Lieutenant

Holland, and perhaps partly because of his ruthless terrorizing of his own supporters. The pattern in this case is a recurrent one in the study of guerrilla warfare. A pursuit appears to become a hopeless "stern chase" (in nautical parlance) and then, because the pressure has been kept up, the guerrilla loses heart, quarrels with his own people and then either surrenders or, if he persists, is liquidated or betrayed by his own side. There are many examples of this sequence of events in the history of this war, and they are, in every respect, identical with hundreds of case histories of the Malayan campaign. The lessons are clear -- constant pressure on the guerrilla pays off in the end and, conversely, terrorist pressure by the guerrilla defeats itself in the long run, provided there is a reasonable alternative to guerrilla rule. The alternative, for its part, must obviously be acceptable in general terms, and probably benevolent in terms of law and order.

#### THE LATER YEARS

When the total of British troops had risen to 32,000 in 1887, and their efficiency had grown with experience and acclimatization, the tide began to turn. Constant patrolling between bases supplemented the mobile columns operating against the guerrilla bands whenever they were located. The speed of movement of the cavalry and the mounted infantry enabled them to keep on the track of the guerrillas even in jungle country. (The jungle in Upper Burma, it may be remarked, is not as thick as it is in the Malayan Peninsula or Borneo.)

Great progress was made in the improvement of communications. The railway was extended to Mandalay from Toungoo in the valley of the Sittang and later carried on up the western side of the Irrawaddy Valley to Myitkyina. The Irrawaddy itself was used extensively by steamers (stern-wheelers in the main) and a large road program was put in hand with remarkable speed. In particular, lateral roads were built to open up the country between the major axes in the river valleys. All these measures contributed greatly to the efficiency of government. The Deputy Commissioners were able to travel about their districts and to supervise the disarmament of their people. Police posts were established, and the Pax Britannica became a reality. Undoubtedly, the high caliber of the civil officers and their astounding energy brought a security to the countryside which it had never known before.

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gangs were relentlessly hunted by the soldiers, and latterly to a growing extent by the police, who began to enlist local men, particularly the Kachins of the north. In the later phases, the use of very small parties of soldiers, able to move swiftly and secretly, to surprise the insurgents, was the rule and was very effective. An amnesty was proclaimed and insurgents who surrendered voluntarily were merely disarmed. This policy of clemency paid good dividends.

By 1891 the whole of Upper Burma was at peace. A few expeditions were sent to the Shan States where the feudal rulers had thrown off their allegiance to Thibaw in 1884, but there was little fighting. A few of the guerrilla leaders remained at large, and one, Bo Cho, was not disposed of until 1920 in the broken country of Mount Popa, a mere 100 miles from Mandalay. It is worth noting that, by 1891, the British and Indian troops in Upper Burma had been reduced to some 16,000 from the 1887 figure of 32,000, while the police had increased from nothing to 15,000.

#### CONCLUSION

The lessons of this campaign can be summarized as follows:

- a. A clear political aim, i.e., the annexation of Upper Burma and the determination to pursue it.
- b. Adequate military forces of the right type.
- c. Proper plans for civil administration, including the provision of trained men and police.
- d. Good communications, including road, river, and railway routes, and telegraph facilities.
- e. Good cooperation between civil and military.
- f. In the military sphere:
  - (1) Mobility and speed,
  - (2) The correct use of all arms including light artillery,
  - (3) The use, at the right time, of small parties to surprise guerrillas.

g. The value of clemency toward surrendering guerrillas and the effectiveness of an amnesty policy at the right time.

In this case, the guerrillas had no outside support whatever. The French, who might have been expected to help in the light of their previous activities, did nothing after the fall of Mandalay, though Franco-British rivalry continued at a high pitch for years afterward. One can only surmise that they were deterred by the success of the military operations against Thibaw in the first place and, in the second, by the determination shown by the British to bring the guerrilla phase to an end.

All guerrilla support was internal. It was obtained largely by terror and partly from patriotic or nationalist motives. It consisted almost entirely of food and perhaps a small amount of locally made gunpowder. The British forces' method of isolating the guerrillas from this support was essentially simple. It was to keep the guerrilla on the move and away from the villages where he might get support. Coupled with this was an energetic civil administration, moving in with the troops or very close behind them and demonstrating the advantages of a settled life with law and order as the prime ingredient. Most people will settle for a quiet life.



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## The Boer Guerrillas, 1900-1902

by

Frank H. Brooke

### BACKGROUND

The causes of the war between the British government and the Boer Republics which began in 1899 are many and complex. They are studied further below as they are essentially part of the struggle which continued for three years. The war itself can be divided into two main phases--the conventional campaign of 1899-1900, and the guerrilla campaign of 1900-1902. Each of these can be further subdivided into two parts. The "conventional" fighting began with a series of British defeats and Boer successes. This subphase was ended with the arrival of Roberts and Kitchener, and the second subphase continued through the British successes of 1900 which culminated in the fall of the capitals of the Boer Republics and the flight of President Kruger. The guerrilla phase, in turn, can be conveniently divided into the "pre-blockhouse" and "post-blockhouse" subphases.

The terrain influenced operations in all phases to a notable extent. Apart from the coastal plain of limited depth, the country rises steeply to a vast plateau at a height of 4,000 to 6,000 feet, with ranges of mountains topping 10,000 feet in places. With some exceptions the country is well watered, though the normal rainfall is low by Temperate Zone standards and the greater part can be described as of savannah type, mainly grassland and subject to occasional but severe drought. The two great rivers, the Vaal and the Orange, running roughly from east to west, marked the southern boundaries of the two Boer Republics. On the west and south the Orange Free State was bordered by the British settlement of Natal. To the North the Transvaal Republic had the Portuguese territory of Mozambique on its eastern frontier, the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland on the west, and the new country of Rhodesia across the Limpopo River to the north.

The Boer Republics were thus landlocked with no direct access to the sea. The ports of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Durban were in British territory. The only other port in the whole area, Lourenço Marques on Delagoa Bay, was Portuguese. By the beginning of the war in 1899 there was an extensive rail network connecting the ports in British South Africa with the Boer capitals of Bloemfontein and Pretoria. The railways had come into being as a result of the diamond and gold finds made in 1871 and 1886. However, in 1895 the Transvaal Republic had realized its need for another route to the sea, and a railway was opened between Pretoria and Delagoa Bay. Apart from the railways, communications were poor, consisting mainly of dirt and gravel roads carrying horse- or ox-drawn wagons.

Along the railway lines and a few of the roads ran a fairly well-developed telegraph system, while Cape Town and Durban were in touch with the outside world by ocean cable.

The development of the diamond and gold mines had changed the economy of the country in a revolutionary way from 1871 onward, but this development was restricted, broadly speaking, to the towns of Kimberley and Johannesburg, the ports of Cape Town and Durban, and the railways that linked them. In the rest of the country and particularly in the Boer Republics, life went on much as before with a thin and scattered farming population continuing a remote and pastoral existence. The Boer population was scattered because of the nature of the land and the type of farming (a typical homestead might be 5,000 acres, mainly grazing land). The white population of the Transvaal and Orange Free State in 1899 is not known accurately (there was no census until 1904) but was probably about a third of a million, with the Boer element totalling about 200,000. The remainder were farming settlers of British stock and the mining communities--mainly British, but including a number of US citizens.

#### NATURE OF THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT

The Boer himself (the term "Boer" is used rather than the modern one "Afrikaner") stemmed from the original Dutch settlers at the Cape of Good Hope, established there by the Dutch East India Company early in the mid-17th Century to provide fresh provisions for their ships trading to the East. The burghers were reinforced by successive waves of immigrants from Holland and by a large French Huguenot element after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Huguenots were completely absorbed almost at once, leaving only their surnames and some influence on

the language of the "Cape Dutch" to survive the strongly nationalist atmosphere they entered.

The Cape Dutch were independent by nature (there were many minor rebellions and quarrels with their Amsterdam-appointed governors and officials), strongly Calvinist by religion, and basically republican by conviction. Isolated from Europe, they lived a life of their own for 200 years, preserving their religious and political freedom as far as they could, and expanding their foothold at the Cape ever further into Africa. They fought and subdued the few native tribes and built up a fairly prosperous rural economy based on slave labor.

Into this static 17th-Century society came the British to forestall a French occupation of the Cape under Napoleon. First by conquest, and then by purchase, the British secured definitive possession of the Cape at the Treaty of Paris in 1814. British colonial administration and liberal views on the treatment of the colored man did not suit the Boers at all. They had always maintained a policy of racial superiority, believing it to be justified by Holy Writ ("the sons of Ham . . ."), and the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1834 was the last straw for many. In 1835 the Great Trek away from the domination of the British began. Hundreds and thousands of Boer farmers with their families and their cattle set off toward the free open spaces of the east and north, continuing and accelerating a trend that had begun earlier. On the way they met the Zulus and other Bantu tribes who were migrating southward at the same time. Many battles were fought to enable the Trek to go on and to secure land already occupied. They pushed east into Natal as well as to the north, where they established themselves beyond the Orange and Vaal Rivers. In 1820 the British government had sponsored a settlement by British colonists (mainly veterans of the Napoleonic Wars) in the eastern coastal districts. The Boer thrust into Natal was resisted by the British government, and a short war followed. In 1842 British authority was established in Natal, and a year later it became a British colony, being combined with Cape Colony for administration.

In 1848 the country between the Vaal and Orange Rivers was declared British territory. Though the Boers were not united on this, a minority took up arms and were defeated by British forces. As a result of various conventions and agreements between 1854 and 1856 the British withdrew from the country north of the Orange River, and the Orange Free State came into existence, while the independence of the Transvaal as the South African Republic was recognized by the British government.

The inhabitants of both republics fought a number of wars against the Kaffirs and the Basuto tribes, but South Africa was then relatively peaceful until the founding in 1871 of the town of Kimberley, as the center of the diamond industry. As already remarked, this new source of wealth changed the whole economy, and further inspired a bitter disagreement between the British and the Orange Free State. Briefly, the British government had annexed the diamond lands claimed by the Free State, though settling the matter by a money payment three years later.

From 1877 for some years the British government worked toward a federation of all the South Africa territories. This was a sensible and sincere aim, but when the Transvaal was "annexed" as a step toward it there followed vigorous protests by the Boers. The Boers at this time strove only for the independence of the two republics they had carved out for themselves; but within a few years a movement for a larger program of "South Africa for the South Africans" gained strength. Encouraged by this, the Transvaal revolted and the first Boer War began in 1880. The British forces were defeated at Majuba, and Gladstone's government conceded independence to the Transvaal under the suzerainty of Great Britain in 1881.

During the next few years the British government was concerned to check German Imperial expansion eastward from Southwest Africa and concluded treaties with the Bechuanaland native chiefs to ensure the route to the north where Cecil Rhodes was developing the country which was to bear his name. The Boers at this time attempted to establish a republic in Zululand to gain access to the sea, but were frustrated by the British, who annexed St. Lucia Bay.

In 1886 gold was discovered in rich reefs on the Rand in the southern Transvaal. The usual "rush" followed, and the city of Johannesburg was laid out. Four years later the railway from Cape Town reached the new gold-mining center, and the development of its immense wealth truly began. The mining community was largely British, with a considerable number of American miners and financiers. The Transvaal government, though grateful for the money brought in by taxation (the Boers had always been averse to paying taxes to the British or their own governments), regarded this influx as "Uitlanders" (literally outlanders or outsiders) and did little for them. The not unknown cry of "no taxation without representation" was raised without much result. Further grievances over education and police protection were added to the demand for the franchise. It is probable that President Kruger's government in Pretoria might have made concessions in due time, but on



December 31, 1895, Dr. L. Starr Jameson, a close friend and business partner of Rhodes (then Prime Minister of Cape Colony) led a small armed force over the Transvaal border with the aim of capturing Johannesburg and "liberating" the Uitlanders. Rhodes was probably implicated to some extent and resigned as Prime Minister after the ill-conceived raid had been ignominiously defeated by Boer commandos and its leaders jailed in Pretoria. The Transvaal and the Orange Free State concluded an offensive and defensive treaty as a direct result of the raid, and further pressure was put on the Uitlanders. This culminated in the Aliens Expulsion Act and various restrictions on the press and on public meeting, which caused continuous friction between Great Britain and the Transvaal. An attempt to heal the breach was made by the Bloemfontein Conference in May-June 1899, but this failed and, President Kruger's ultimatum to Great Britain being rejected, a state of war followed on October 12.

In brief, war came as the result of a series of incidents reflecting the Boer passion for freedom from interference by anyone and the British urge to expand and secure the Empire. The situation was aggravated greatly by the change from a pastoral economy to a sophisticated industrial society producing vast wealth from gold and diamonds. The change was a sudden one and the Boer could not adapt himself to it. He was in fact an 18th-Century man dragged unwillingly into the 20th, by the British expansion, which included the aim of securing a monopoly in gold and diamonds.

#### BOER ORGANIZATION

In 1899 both the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were republics, each with an elected president (Kruger and Steyn respectively) and an elected assembly known as the Volksraad. Government was largely by agreement; and administration was minimal for two reasons--first the Boer's dislike of authority almost amounting to anarchy, and second his aversion to paying taxes. The courts functioned under the Roman-Dutch code, and the police force was confined to the few large towns. (Crime was almost nonexistent in the countryside.) There was no standing army (apart from an efficient corps of artillery), but every man from 17 to 70 was required to serve in his local commando in emergency, providing his own weapon, horses, and initial supply of food and ammunition. Wagons drawn by horses or oxen provided the transport for bulk stores (mainly ammunition, digging tools, and food). Forage for the horses was obtained by local



grazing, as was sustenance for the herds of cattle and sheep which accompanied the wagon trains during major moves or concentrations.

There were a few forts which acted as arsenals or depots, holding reserve arms and ammunition. Before the war began there had been an extensive arms procurement program. This had produced modern rifles (Mauser) and Krupp field guns from Germany, and a smaller quota of Creusot guns from France. Saddlery and horse equipment were produced locally, and uniform was not provided.

The commando system was extremely flexible. The size of a commando varied greatly, but all were mounted, generally with spare horses. The Boer was an experienced fighting man, who had fought both the British and the Bantu tribes on many occasions. He knew the terrain, was a good marksman, and was mobile. His military capacity was as seriously underestimated by the British as was the strength of his nationalism. The Boer leadership was intelligent, ruthless, and single-minded.

#### THE BRITISH ORGANIZATION

The British forces based in Cape Colony and Natal consisted of Regular troops from the United Kingdom and a substantial body of mounted police organized on paramilitary lines. The Regulars included cavalry, artillery, engineers, and infantry, but, being garrison troops rather than a field force, they were short of transport and logistic support. The intelligence system was rudimentary at the outset, and the general atmosphere was one of confident unpreparedness. The British army had not fought a major campaign for nearly 50 years, and the standard of generalship displayed in the early stages can only be described as poor. Some reinforcements had been sent from England in the period after the Jameson Raid, but the logistic side remained weak.

#### THE FIRST PHASE OF THE WAR

At the outset the Boers could field some 60,000 armed men--a force considerably larger than the British could deploy. The British forces garrisoning the towns of Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking were soon invested and on the defensive. A Boer sortie into Natal met with initial success, and serious defeats were inflicted on the British forces attempting to relieve Ladysmith.

By January 1900 the Boers believed they had won and expected peace overtures from the British government. Instead troop reinforcements poured into South Africa, and the invasion of the Boer republics drove forward under Roberts and Kitchener. The British forces suffered grave supply difficulties but were supported by a wave of patriotic fervor at home almost unequalled before or since. Kimberley was relieved, and the Boers were defeated on the Modder River in a hard and bloody battle. Then Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State, fell to Roberts's army, but his further advance was checked for weeks by enteric and cholera epidemics. These put tens of thousands of soldiers in the hospital and spread to the civil population.

Both sides rested. The British waited for the supplies to build up to enable them to push north into the Transvaal, and the Boers hoped for outside intervention. Presidents Steyn and Kruger made peace proposals which were rejected. The Queen of the Netherlands asked the German Kaiser to support collective action, but he avoided the issue. Roberts issued an amnesty proclamation, which brought in 8,000 Free State Boers who handed in their rifles, took an oath of loyalty, and went home. The war was almost over, but the British could not advance, because of sickness among men and horses and shortage of supplies and transport. The Boers then carried out a number of raiding operations with some success, mainly under the able leadership of Christian R. De Wet. At this time the Boers were joined by a number of volunteers from France, Russia, and Germany, which raised further hopes of outside intervention.

By May 1900, however, Roberts was ready; and before the end of the month Mafeking had been relieved. Kruger and his government left Pretoria, and it seemed to the British that the occupation of the Transvaal capital would finish the war. In June it fell to Roberts and it appeared that the Boer Commandos were routed. Many had returned to their homes or surrendered around Pretoria.

To the Boers the situation seemed hopeless, but some 6,000 men now rallied round their new Commandant-General Louis Botha north of Johannesburg. They scattered in the face of the British superiority in numbers, and operating in small groups threatened or attacked key points on the British lines of communication. The success of these tactics, limited as it was, offered a glimmer of hope. From this time on the guerrilla phase of the war began, even though in September President Kruger had left the country through Delagoa Bay and taken ship for Europe. President Steyn remained determined, though "on the run," and Jan

Smuts had joined Botha and Jacobus de la Rey in the north. The Boers had lost their bases; and their farms were now their only source of supply. In August and September Roberts formulated and proclaimed the policy of "farm burning" to frustrate this sole alternative for the Boers. The farm-burning policy was intended originally to be both limited and selective, and its aim was to deny supply. However, it was difficult to control in detail and much widespread and random destruction was carried out by British troops, sometimes as unofficial reprisal for Boer raids and sniping.

### BOER AIMS

The war policy of the Boers at this time is difficult to define precisely. It varied from day to day, and difficulties of communication made it impossible to impose a single plan over the whole area. It is clear, however, that two leaders--Botha and Smuts--decided to continue the struggle with all the means at hand. Smuts had been left behind in Pretoria at Kruger's departure, and in October 1900 he met the other leaders, including the successful De Wet and de la Rey, north of Johannesburg. This was an important meeting, as it was decided to concentrate forces to attack and destroy the Rand gold mines and to invade Cape Colony. The opportunity for the first operation never arose, but Smuts never wavered on the second. He had earlier, in July, secured a position with de la Rey, which virtually made the two men a government of the Western Transvaal. Kruger was in Holland, but the government in exile was ineffective except for propaganda purposes, and it was impossible to refer to it for decisions within reasonable time.

Until December 1900 Smuts remained with de la Rey (as a sort of political commissar and second-in-command), learning the business of guerrilla war in the Magaliesberg (a range of jagged mountains north of Johannesburg) against the British columns trying to disrupt and trap the commandos. The hit-and-run tactics of the Boers were highly successful, but the Magaliesberg operations had to come to an end because they could no longer get support from the devastated countryside. The farm-burning policy of the British included driving off livestock and the removal of the women and children to concentration camps, so that the commandos could no longer find food and fresh horses. Ammunition and rifles were also becoming a problem, which could be solved only by capturing them from the British. This Smuts did in a notable action at Moddersfontein.

However, Smuts still fixed his mind on the invasion of Cape Colony, where it was hoped that the appearance of his forces would cause a general rebellion by the Boer half of the population. This hope was reinforced by reports of meetings and unrest there. The overall aim remained--complete independence for the two Boer Republics. In Smuts's mind there was also the idea of an independent United States of Africa, on which he had written a powerful tract some years earlier during the period of tension after the Jameson Raid. All his political thinking pointed to Cape Colony being the key to achieving the Boer aims, and he continued his political warfare intensively while also acting as an inspiring leader in the field. Underlying all Boer thinking was the hope of outside intervention by the great powers, which they felt must surely come in time. To this end Smuts wrote voluminously and continuously.

Soon he was to be presented with more propaganda material as the British farm-burning and concentration camp policy got under way. The camps were humanely administered, but the mass hygiene of the time was unequal to the load, and epidemics and disease affected the internees as well as the soldiers. Some 20,000 women and children died of sickness to which they had no immunity after generations of life on remote farms. The most was made of this "barbarism" by all available propaganda methods, and the issue was taken up in the capitals of the world. Great Britain at this time was by no means popular with the other great powers. Relations with France were still strained over Fashoda, and the Entente Cordiale was still in the future. Germany was openly on the side of the Boers, and the Kaiser's congratulatory telegram to Kruger on the failure of the Jameson Raid was more than symptomatic. Germany, however, did not intervene and provided only moral support. An important factor here was the overwhelming supremacy of the Royal Navy, which enabled the British government to cut off all outside support in the material sense and to deter any potential offer of support. In short, European support for the Boers remained, in British eyes, no more than an extremely remote contingency. The United States stood aside, being engaged in her own expansion and her own imperialist phase.

However, the Boers had a powerful ally in London--the left wing of the Liberal opposition in Parliament. Many Liberals had opposed the war fairly consistently, and the Boers had hoped all along for a change of government which would give them their desires. At one time, particularly in 1899, this had looked probable, and in 1901 it still remained possible. Also active in London and the European capitals was a body of skilled

propaganda writers which included Miss Emily Hobhouse and W.T. Stead. The conditions in the camps were fuel for the fire in any humanitarian campaign, and when the death rate rose to over 300 per 1,000 the situation became grave for the British government. So the Boers had some justification for their hopes, and political warfare was intensified, particularly by Smuts, who kept up a busy correspondence with the outside world. Rhodes and his associates waged a vigorous counterpropaganda campaign in London, but this was ineffective, and even counterproductive, because of his "big business" image and his suspected complicity in the Jameson Raid planning.

### THE BRITISH ATTITUDE AND ACTIONS

By all the normal canons of war the Boers should have surrendered when their governments had fled and their capitals had been occupied. The fact that they did not was a surprise in itself, but merely stiffened the British will to persist against an equally stubborn opponent. Roberts returned to England, believing that only "mopping-up" was required. The command devolved on Kitchener--the general who had never lost a battle--and he intensified the measures already put in hand. Farm-burning, however, took time to complete, and the Boers could still get supplies in remote districts. When they could not they captured them in a series of raids on British camps and field depots.

The possibility of a rebellion in Cape Colony was a serious contingency. De Wet had attempted an invasion, but been easily repulsed owing largely to the hesitancy and slowness of his subordinate commanders. The number of British troops in the country far exceeded the total Boer population, but the "drives" and encircling movements nearly always failed to round up the elusive commandos. Kitchener was an engineer and had another card to play--fortifications of a special type, the "blockhouse concept." The blockhouses were simple to build, consisting of two large iron water tanks, the larger surrounding the smaller and the whole made bulletproof by a layer of gravel and earth between the two skins. Each had a small infantry garrison and was placed within supporting distance of the next. Nearly always a barbed-wire fence ran between the blockhouses. The whole concept was entirely that of the Great Wall of China or Hadrian's Wall in Britain, with the difference, of course, in this case that the enemy was everywhere. The aim was to isolate the Boers from support by the combination of farm-burning and the blockhouse lines; and then to pursue the commandos with flying columns with the hope of surrounding them or driving them against the lines. The effort involved was immense; 5,000 miles of blockhouses and wire were built.



(For comparison it is 800 miles from Cape Town to Johannesburg.) In addition there were 40 isolated garrisons and troops stationed in all main centers of population. The blockhouse lines, broadly speaking, protected the British lines of communication as well as providing barriers against Boer movement and support. In one or two instances the blockhouse lines were breached by determined Boer attacks, but generally they were effective in the long run. They also made it difficult for the Boers to concentrate large forces without being detected by an increasingly effective intelligence organization.

By the end of February 1901 Kitchener had so tightened his grip as to feel justified in approaching the Boer Commandant, General Botha, with a view to peace talks. The two men met, and though the accounts of the talks are confused and conflicting it is clear that Kitchener favored some sort of negotiated peace, but the British government and its High Commissioner, Milner, were insistent on unconditional surrender. The negotiations broke down and the war went on.

The Boers, however, were in a near-desperate military situation and met to discuss the question of sending an envoy to Kruger in Holland. This idea and the question of asking for an armistice were firmly rejected by President Steyn, still "on the run," but still resolute. In June a Boer Council of War decided against any peace proposals which did not ensure independence for the republics or "satisfactorily provide for the case of our Cape Colonial brethren." The only chance of making good this resolution lay in a successful rebellion in Cape Colony and outside intervention.

### THE INVASION OF CAPE COLONY

Early in August 1901 Smuts and his men crossed the Vaal River. In a speech he told the little force of 340 that it was "a struggle for Right, for God. If they failed, God would fail too." Brave words indeed, but not ridiculous in historical retrospect. Smuts must be given credit for a true appreciation of the strategic possibilities. His invasion presented a very real threat to the security of the Colony and of Cape Town itself. Unfortunately for the Boers it was a case of too little and too late. Stronger forces employed a few months earlier might have been decisive. As it was, Smuts's force carried out an almost incredible foray of some 2,000 miles, through the Orange Free State first and then the entire breadth of the Cape



Colony. A number of successful actions were fought on the way, and by the end of the year he was established in the northwestern corner of Cape Colony, having either broken through or avoided the blockhouse lines. He opened communications with the "Deputation" in Holland through German Southwest Africa and reorganized and regrouped the scattered commandos which the British were rounding up one by one. But progress was disappointing to the Boer cause. Though the farm-burning policy was not applied in the Colony, the British had commandeered the horses and this prevented any effective recruitment of fresh strength. Smuts's force barely exceeded 600 men in the end, and he found himself virtually isolated in the wide open spaces of the northern Cape Colony. In January 1902 he wrote a long political tract addressed to W.T. Stead and intended to appeal to the conscience of the English people. It included a bitter denunciation of the wrongs inflicted on the Boers by the British, but ended with a plea for "a stable Commonwealth in South Africa, in which Boer and Briton will both be proud to be partners." Ten years later this idea was to be achieved, but now he and the other Boer leaders realized that they could not go on. The stage was set for the Peace of Vereeniging, which after several meetings was finally signed on May 31, 1902. It is unnecessary to go into the details of the settlement except to note that the British would not concede complete independence, but agreed to pay compensation for the burned farms and other war damage. This compensation was eventually on an extremely generous basis and enabled the Boers to rebuild their economy in the two republics, which in turn made possible the Union in 1910 of Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State. The part which Smuts and Botha played in establishing the Union is too well known to justify further comment.

#### CONCLUSION

The years of the second phase of the war in South Africa may fairly be said to represent a classic case of guerrilla warfare. All the elements are present. An inferior armed force, unable to face its enemies in open battle, adopts hit-and-run tactics, hopes for outside intervention to tip the scales, and strives to gain it. The opponent, stronger in numbers and material, having won the initial and conventional campaign, is forced to continue the struggle (by political intransigence on both sides), and seeks to regain the initiative by isolating the guerrilla from his external and internal support, knowing that in the end victory will go to the big battalions.

To achieve the victory not only must the big battalions be big enough, but the guerrilla enemy must be deprived of support and defeated by force of arms. The Boers, from the outset in 1899, received no outside support in the material sense, and so were dependent on internal support alone. This form of support had to be eliminated--hence the farm-burnings, the concentration camps, and the blockhouse lines. This aspect of war has often been described as "counterproductive" in the modern idiom. So it is, in a purely political assessment; but political considerations can seldom stand alone. War remains an extension of politics, and though the devastated farms and the 20,000 dead in the camps have provided the bitterest memories of the war for the Boer, yet the policy was a military necessity.

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## France and the Guerrilla War in Vietnam: 1945-1954\*

by

Frank N. Trager

### INTRODUCTION

In order to offer a treatment of guerrilla war in Vietnam in whatever depth of background a reader may desire, modern French and current American experience are presented apart from the geographic and historical setting of these events. This material is gathered at the end of this volume in Appendix A, "French Experience in Vietnam: Geographic and Historical Setting." The reader's attention is particularly invited to the final section of that Appendix, entitled: "General Observations on French Counterinsurgency Experience and Practice Prior to World War II."

In the preparation of the study of modern French experience, 1945-1954, two different, although not mutually exclusive, sets of data were examined and assimilated--for the Viet Minh and for the French--neither of which was fully accessible. The Viet Minh data exhibited the singleness of purpose which gave coherence to its operations, as we have attempted to make clear. The French record, on the other hand, could not be restricted to the Vietnam scene; on the contrary, it could only be understood against the exhaustive backdrop of metropolitan politics and the personalities and instrumentalities through which political decisions filtered and interacted: parliamentary and ministerial committees, ministries, administrative and executive officials, financial interests, political parties, colonial authorities, Vietnamese political factions, and the military establishment. In fact, a special feature of this French record, and one which would also require a separate study, concerns the French military infrastructure,

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\*This paper was prepared with the assistance of Marjorie W. Normand.

both at home and in Vietnam, the disintegration of its command and control leadership, and its increased isolation from the body politic. In a very real sense, both regarding personnel and failures, Vietnam presaged Algeria and contributed vitally to the military disenchantment which culminated in the attempted Putsch and the fall of the Fourth Republic. In losing Vietnam, then, France lost more than a parcel of colonial territory.

### NATURE OF THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT

#### Rise of the Viet Min.

The single most important factor contributing to the Viet Minh success in driving France from Vietnam was its ability to gain and retain leadership of the nationalist revolution, especially in the north, and thus to become the symbol of the national will to independence. None of this had much to do with refinements of political ideology, other than the pervasive anti-French colonialist temper of most elite Vietnamese. At the time, this effort was not publicly tied to Communist doctrine. The Communists in the late 1930s championed the Popular Front and its moderate program, and in fact nearly forfeited whatever popularity they had acquired as anti-imperialists by eschewing the drive for independence. While the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) was thereby following international Comintern policy, it was striving nonetheless to build a local image as the vehicle to express the inchoate aspirations of a disgruntled peasantry. Subsequent party literature has stressed its leadership of the 1931 peasant "revolts," thus laying claim to an unbroken history of revolutionary leadership.

It is a tribute to the organizational discipline and flexibility of the ICP that it was able to survive intact the French repressive policies following collapse of the Popular Front in 1938. Many of its leaders, along with other Vietnamese revolutionaries, fled into exile. At the outbreak of World War II, in line with Comintern policy advocating the formation of united fronts encompassing the widest possible spectrum of nationalist organizations, the ICP convoked a meeting in southern China in May 1941. Under the guidance of veteran Communist leader Ho Chi Minh, a front group was formed for the stated purpose of freeing Vietnam from foreign imperialist domination and achieving independence. Ho Chi Minh was named Secretary-General and Communists were given key positions in this coalition, named the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (League for the Independence of Vietnam),

better known as the Viet Minh. In order to rally Vietnamese of all political and religious persuasions and social classes, the Viet Minh program made no mention of the key Communist doctrines of social revolution and agrarian reform; instead it emphasized the ouster of both French and Japanese forces, national independence, and the formation of a broadly based government.

The Japanese coup of March 9, 1945, with the Emperor Bao Dai proclaiming Vietnam's independence under Japan's aegis, destroyed the façade of French (Vichy) authority in Vietnam and provided enormous impetus to the revolutionary movement. Prior to that time, the Viet Minh had concentrated on securing and enlarging a political base of operations in the Viet Bac area north and northeast of Hanoi, on spreading its influence among the masses by building up village cells, and on recruiting a guerrilla army. The military task was entrusted to Vo Nguyen Giap, a former history teacher and Communist agitator who went to China to study Mao's theory and practices of guerrilla warfare. By Giap's own admission, he started with a nucleus of 34 poorly armed men. However, recruitment was rapid. Before the Japanese take-over, his force had grown to 1,000 men and by the time of the Japanese surrender, it had increased to 5,000 men. Although Giap did not officially constitute his guerrillas as a Liberation Army (in Cao Bang province) until December 1944, his guerrilla forces had already extended their intelligence and reconnaissance network southward and had begun to infiltrate French-patrolled areas. The sudden disappearance of the colonial administration in 1945 facilitated the Viet Minh ability both to consolidate its political bases in the hinterland (especially in the Viet Bac region) and to increase its military penetration in the Red River delta. Viet Minh forces even transformed villages into "liberation bases" controlled by Viet Minh cadres and ruled by National Liberation Committees which combined administrative, political, and military duties. However, Viet Minh authority was spreading unevenly through the country. It was especially weak in Cochinchina, the area furthest from its stronghold, where nationalist support was fragmented and control dispersed among rival political-religious sects, as well as a strong Trotskyist movement.

Viet Minh leaders reacted with energy and initiative to news of the sudden Japanese capitulation. They determined to overthrow whatever government power structure still operated--both Vietnamese and Japanese--and to take over actual physical control of the administrative buildings in Hanoi and other centers from the existing authorities. In short, the plan was to move into a power vacuum and present the Vietnamese people with a fait accompli before opposition could arise either internally or internationally.<sup>1</sup> To this end a national congress of the Viet Minh was hastily



summoned on August 13, 1945. It approved a policy of insurrection and adopted a ten-point program of action authorizing the Viet Minh to seize power from the Japanese, proclaim independence, and welcome the Allies in the name of the Vietnamese people. Several days later, the Japanese officially handed the reins of government over to Emperor Bao Dai. Effective control, however, was passing into the hands of Viet Minh agents. Viet Minh soldiers moved into Hanoi and took over administrative control throughout the north. Faced with this determined and militant organization claiming to lead a national revolution, Bao Dai, on August 26, abdicated in favor of the Viet Minh-sponsored regime and urged his countrymen to rally to the cause of independence. He also accepted the post of Supreme Political Advisor in the provisional government, thus providing it with an important symbol of legitimacy and continuity. On September 2, Ho Chi Minh, as President of the provisional government, proclaimed the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to a vast crowd in Hanoi and officially repudiated all prior treaties with France.

The August insurrection succeeded in achieving for the Viet Minh the governmental power to which it aspired, but only in the north. In South Vietnam, the pattern of revolution differed sharply. Competing nationalist groups disagreed violently in their attitude toward France and the Allies and only reluctantly joined the Viet Minh in an uneasy united front, the Provisional Executive Committee of the South. The decision which sealed the fate of the Viet Minh in the south, however, and set the pattern for the future war, was taken not in Vietnam but in Potsdam in 1945. There it was decided by the victorious Allies that Kuomintang Chinese troops would reoccupy Vietnam north of the 16th parallel to disarm the Japanese, and British forces would do likewise in the south.

The British under General Douglas Gracey arrived in September 1945 and remained for approximately four months. During this time, they maintained order and permitted the French military in Saigon forcibly to wrest control from the Committee of the South and expel the Viet Minh from the city. General Leclerc, the French military commander, and Admiral d'Argenlieu, the newly appointed High Commissioner, proceeded to reimpose French military and political authority in South Vietnam, and Viet Minh forces withdrew to the countryside.

In the north, Chinese military authorities were neither so eager to leave nor so favorably inclined to facilitate French re-entry. The Kuomintang harbored political ambitions encouraged by 1,000 years of Vietnamese vassalage to China, and centering around the political fortunes of the KMT-sponsored coalition, the Dong

Minh Hoi (Viet Nam Cach Menh Dong Minh Hoi--Vietnam Revolutionary League), and the violently anti-French Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang--Vietnam Nationalist Party (VNQDD). To mollify the Chinese, the Viet Minh took both these nationalist parties into a reshuffled government and allotted them seats in a newly elected National Assembly apparently far in excess of their popular strength.

Actually, there are no objective data for estimating popular loyalties, only observations and guesses. Fearful of dissipating their energies fighting on a triple front--against the Chinese, French, and opposition nationalist groups--the Viet Minh, in a classical Leninist maneuver ("two steps forward, one step backward," as illustrated by Brest-Litovsk), decided to come to terms with France. A preliminary agreement was finally signed on March 6, 1946, but it was satisfactory to neither side. France recognized the DRV as a "free state, having its own government, parliament, army and treasury, belonging to the Indochinese Federation and to the French Union"<sup>2</sup> but powerful voices both in France and Saigon were raised in protest against the "recognition" accorded the new regime. On the other hand, the Viet Minh, in undertaking to permit the return of French troops to Vietnam, risked alienating bona fide nationalists as well as extremists among their own followers.<sup>3</sup> (Parenthetically it should be noted that as soon as the Chinese withdrawal permitted, the Viet Minh struck the nationalists, primarily from the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi. With tacit French permission they thus disposed of a source of competition for themselves and potential troublemakers for the incoming French authorities.) Two crucial issues were left for further negotiation: the status of Cochinchina and the distribution of functions and powers among the "free state," the Indochinese Federation, and the French Union.

Whether or not either side intended to honor all the terms of the March 6 accord is a moot point; there were elements in both countries with the will and power to sabotage peace in Vietnam and they ultimately won out. While Ho Chi Minh was leading a delegation to France to attend the Fontainebleau (July) Conference, at which details of the agreement were to be "ironed out," Admiral d'Argenlieu was proclaiming an autonomous republic in Cochinchina and encouraging separatist tendencies among the hill tribes in the high plateau region, in contravention of the March 6 agreement. If the Vietnamese delegation had its provocation, it also miscalculated the political temper in Paris. Rather than counting on the enlightened conservatives of the MRP (Mouvement Populaire Republicain)<sup>4</sup> and among the Gaullists, who could afford to support their more moderate demands and were sympathetic to them, they openly courted the left wing, on the assumption that the Communists would soon form a government.<sup>5</sup>

But the Communists and Socialists (SFIO)<sup>6</sup> dared not risk alienating the electorate by supporting an anticolonialist cause, so the Viet Minh found themselves without a champion to guide them through the intricacies of French political maneuvering. The Fontainebleau Conference came to an end without making any progress on the two major points at issue--unification of Vietnam and definition of a "free state"--although Ho Chi Minh signed on September 14 a modus vivendi on minor points.

In view of the inability of the Viet Minh and French governments to come to any agreement on fundamental questions, and the extreme mutual mistrust displayed by various elements in both camps, it is not surprising that a series of military incidents ensued in November at Haiphong and Lang Son, culminating in the outbreak of large-scale fighting in Hanoi on December 19, 1946. This was the beginning of a war which would last for eight years and would turn a little-known area of the world into an international battlefield. And once fighting broke out, the Viet Minh problem of rallying Vietnamese of all political persuasions to its banner became simplified: the Vietnamese were given the choice of being pro-French or pro-independence, and there were few if any genuine nationalists among the Vietnamese who opted for the French in 1946.

#### Political Dynamics and Structure of Government

When they took to the hills in 1946, the Viet Minh claimed to possess two of the appurtenances of a modern democratic state: a written constitution guaranteeing fundamental individual rights and a National Assembly popularly elected. In reality, the constitution was more a propaganda façade than a working plan of government: it was adopted in 1946 when the Viet Minh were looking to the United States for support against France and therefore contained many features of--and even language from--the American constitution. The structure of government provided in the constitution was never put into operation, because of the wartime "crisis conditions"; the National Assembly was dissolved in November 1946, after it had approved the new government, and did not meet again until 1953. And although the Viet Minh had boasted that the national elections of January 1946 which had elected the National Assembly were free and democratic, they had controlled the results to such an extent that they could allot seats in the Assembly to rival political parties prior to the elections.

Effective legislative power, then, was lodged, not with the National Assembly as a whole, but with its Permanent Committee and with the executive branch. The National Assembly, on November 3, 1946, had voted Ho Chi Minh the positions of both President and Prime Minister. He thereby combined both executive and legislative powers and ruled together with a Cabinet (Council of Ministers) and the Permanent Committee of the National Assembly, most of whose members also held commensurate positions of importance in the Viet Minh Politburo, which had the effective decision-making power.

Regional organization was somewhat haphazard, especially during the early years of the war when the Viet Minh operated on a *de facto* basis. People's councils were supposed to be elected at all levels by direct universal suffrage, but they were often suspended, especially at the lower echelons. Instead, legislative, administrative, and even judicial functions were performed by unofficial "resistance committees" staffed by political appointees of the Viet Minh. They acted as channels to enforce governmental laws and decrees, linking the central authority with the smallest village or canton. At the provincial level and below, they were even charged with recruiting local defense and security forces and with conducting other military efforts. In 1948, Vietnam was divided into six interzones to coordinate military and administrative affairs.

Until 1950, the DRV leadership placed primary emphasis on the coalition nature of its government, a policy that permitted it to expand its popular base without relinquishing any actual political control. In fact, the Viet Minh had supposedly been superseded in 1946 by an even more inclusive organization, the Lien Viet.<sup>7</sup> The merger, however, had never been completed, and the popular organization of the masses remained the Viet Minh. Its influence extended throughout the countryside by means of a network of "grass roots" committees and organizations designed to mobilize popular support behind the national effort, and, perhaps more important, ensure that all segments of the population, all social classes, were involved in a group where they could be watched and controlled. The organizations to which they belonged represented a multiplicity of interests and identifications, social, religious, economic, and political. Behind this façade of diversity, political power was exercised by the Communist leadership in the Viet Minh Politburo and, later, the Vietnamese Workers' Party (Dang Lao Dong).

Although the Indochinese Communist Party was supposedly dissolved in 1945 in an effort to disguise the Communist affiliation of much of the Viet Minh leadership, subsequent Communist literature

has claimed for the Party an unbroken leadership of the revolutionary movement since 1931. So it is reasonable to assume that it merely went underground temporarily, its leaders sitting instead on the Viet Minh Politburo. A favorable international climate permitted it to re-emerge in 1951 as the Workers' Party and again to overtly assume command of the DRV. The February 1951 Manifesto of the Workers' Party proclaims it to be a "powerful, clear-sighted, determined, pure and thoroughly revolutionary political party,"<sup>8</sup> with Marxism-Leninism its theoretical foundation, democratic centralism its principle of organization.

The Workers' Party structure was highly centralized, extending down through zone to region, province and village, to the basic unit of organization, the cell group. Influence and control over the people was maintained by the Party's trained propaganda agents, or cadres (can bo), who lived in the villages as the chief spokesmen for government policies and influenced the people to be more receptive to government propaganda. In addition, they kept the government informed about public opinion and attitudes and entered into the activities of all organized village groups. Their influence varied in direct proportion to the government's control over the political and administrative machinery of a given village or region and so did their work. Sent out as propaganda teams to villages not yet completely secure, their role gradually evolved to that of developing front groups. Finally, as a village was brought securely into the Viet Minh camp, the cadres were instrumental in recruiting for local guerrilla forces and regional militia. For the primary concern of the Viet Minh, especially in the early years before 1950, was military survival, and all its vast political machinery was geared to the overriding goal of building an army and mobilizing the country for its support.

#### The Military Establishment

The Vietnam People's Army (VPA) was conceived and used as a political army, a reliable and loyal instrument of government, and this political role remained constant and unchanging as its military organization developed and expanded. Under the guidance of Commander in Chief Vo Nguyen Giap, the VPA was shaped into a cohesive, disciplined, thoroughly professional fighting corps. In addition to the regular army (chu luc), Giap developed two additional forces, the regional troops and the popular forces or militia. Each of these had a different role.<sup>9</sup> At the base was the village militia, poorly armed and generally without uniforms, the proverbial "farmer by day and guerrilla by night." These people provided the basic village-level intelligence and screening services so crucial to guerrilla warfare, and performed much



of the manual labor usually reserved to machines in more mechanized countries. Those who performed well were graduated into the regional troops, which had more extensive military training and were generally charged with defending a particular locality. These soldiers also provided a protective screen for the regular army, both before and after battle, and often prepared the battlefield for them. The regional forces had the enormous advantage of fighting in home territory, where they could mobilize the population for intelligence and security and organize the deadly ambushes and hit-and-run raids that kept the French troops demoralized. At the apex of the military organization was the main force, fed by battle-tested regional soldiers, accorded the best weapons and the severest training, an elite corps whose ultimate task it was to crush the French expeditionary corps. The growth of the VPA in a sense paralleled the development of the war from small-scale guerrilla actions to massive operations. During the first years, the popular forces bore the brunt of the French offensives and were later joined by regional troops. Not until the regular army was reinforced by Chinese weapons and hardened by years of training and discipline did Giap hurl it against the French corps in a frontal attack. Even then, this proved premature, and the chu luc was again withdrawn and tactics modified until the propitious moment for a war of movement and, finally, a large-scale confrontation.

The armed forces were not merely politically oriented, they were in fact organizationally linked to the Workers' Party. Basic Party cells existed at all levels of the army's hierarchy, and Party committees were supposed to take the leadership at each echelon. The army also had its own political commissars, provided for in the VPA's enabling decree of March 22, 1946. They functioned as members of the regular army at all levels and shared decision-making powers with the military commander, even on the battlefield.<sup>10</sup> The commissar was also responsible for the political education of each soldier, and lessons in Marxist-Leninist ideology sometimes even preceeded military training. The basic technique for ensuring political conformity was that of self-criticism, and at daily sessions soldiers confessed fears, discussed each others' weaknesses, and evaluated the day's military activities. But soldiers were not only supposed to be disciplined and politically reliable, they also had an important role to play as propaganda agents among the population. For this reason, their relationship with the people upon whom they depended for so much support and protection was minutely and strictly regulated. One of the points of the ten-point oath regular army recruits took swore them "to respect and help the civilian population."<sup>11</sup>



For the peasant was of crucial importance to the soldier, not only for his physical security but also for his material well-being. The Viet Minh made a heavy demand on the population for services, and especially to help solve the thornier problems of logistics, including the carrying of supplies and food to the soldier in battle. Especially during operations which carried the Viet Minh forces far from their bases of operation--such as the invasion of Laos--the transportation of provisions and equipment was a monumental task, which fell almost entirely on the "auxiliary service" of local people. This portage by foot, and by the most primitive mechanical means, thus presented a serious manpower drain on the economy of the north throughout the war period.<sup>12</sup> The transportation system had some advantages, however. The long lines of porters, with or without their loaded bicycles, were easy to camouflage, so French planes could rarely interrupt the slow but steady provisionment of the Viet Minh army in action; furthermore, they could travel over all kinds of terrain, unlike their motorized counterparts in the French army, and were spared the necessity of transporting large quantities of gasoline, oil, etc., for motorized vehicles. After 1950, the Peoples' Army did acquire some transport trucks from China, especially American vehicles captured in Korea, and Soviet Molotovs. But on the whole, this was a most laborious and backbreaking--albeit effective--operation. General Navarre himself pays eloquent homage to the ceaseless labors of the Viet Minh peasant-porters during the battle of Dien Bien Phu, who not only transported the supplies and materiel, but also guarded the lines of communication from the Chinese border to the battlefield, patiently repairing the roads as soon as they were bombed, thus vitiating French efforts to disrupt the transportation system on which all Viet Minh logistics depended.<sup>13</sup>

Another troublesome aspect of logistics for the Viet Minh, especially acute before 1950, was the difficulty of obtaining arms and equipment. Initially, the Viet Minh captured or acquired enough Japanese arms to equip their meager guerrilla forces, supplemented by a small amount of American equipment channeled to them through the OSS. As the Peoples' Army expanded and the need for arms increased, local production attempted to meet basic needs, and the Viet Minh became especially adept in the manufacture of explosives, grenades, and ammunition.<sup>14</sup> The arrival of the Chinese Communists at the border of Tonkin facilitated the passing of war materiel directly to the Peoples' Army and, beginning in 1950, Communist Czechoslovakian and Chinese military aid to the Viet Minh increased significantly. The receipt of recoilless cannon, heavy mortars, and antiaircraft guns--many of them captured from the Americans in Korea--as well as machine guns, tommyguns, and bazookas, changed the complexion of the war for the Viet Minh and enabled the People's Army to open offensives

against the Expeditionary Corps. While estimates as to the amount and quality of foreign aid and equipment received vary, Bernard Fall avers that by the end of 1950, some 40-odd battalions had been entirely equipped by the Chinese with rifles, machine guns, and heavy mortars.<sup>15</sup> About 1951, the Viet Minh began to regroup their armored units into a "heavy" division, which later figured prominently in the battle of Dien Bien Phu.

### Political Ideology and Military Strategy

Possibly even more important than the material assistance and technical aid which the Viet Minh received from Communist China was a doctrine and strategy for waging a military-political war. A number of studies in English have examined in depth both Mao Tse-tung's theories and the use to which they were put in the Vietnamese war; in addition, key propaganda works by Truong Chinh and Vo Nguyen Giap, as well as by Mao, have been translated into English. Therefore, we will be limited here to Giap's improvisations and refinements. It is interesting to note that Vo Nguyen Giap has been reluctant to acknowledge the extent of his debt to Mao and instead has emphasized the "unique" aspects of the Vietnamese war of liberation, particularly that it took place in a colonial country, in a much smaller country than China both in territory and population, and was fought against "foreign imperialists."<sup>16</sup> He has presented himself as an original political theoretician rather than what he was in fact: a brilliant and inventive military strategist.

In On Protracted War Mao Tse-tung put forth the concept of a long-term struggle of resistance characterized by three phases of warfare: the first stage, when the enemy has overwhelming military superiority, is one of defensive action and struggle for survival; the second, a period of active guerrilla warfare, involves the constant harassment of enemy troops by auxiliary militia while regular armed forces are being built up; and finally, in the third stage, the military initiative passes to the revolutionary forces and they launch a general counteroffensive. Giap refined this theory as the war progressed and fit it to the situation in Vietnam. In 1950, with Chinese military assistance, he moved into Phase 2 and inflicted a series of disastrous defeats on the French expeditionary corps, forcing them to abandon their string of forts on the Chinese border. Even Giap was not immune to overconfidence, however, and predicted a general counteroffensive for 1951. De Lattre took up the challenge and defeated Giap's chu luc in battle, clearly demonstrating French superiority

in conventional warfare. Giap thereby reverted to guerrilla warfare and enlarged on its scope. He now saw guerrilla tactics as including many of the principles of regular warfare but within the framework of a war of mobility without fixed fronts, in which the regular army fought everywhere. This mobile warfare would be extended even into Phase 3, when it would be coordinated with many local counteroffensives and conventional battles, aiming now at annihilating, rather than merely sapping the strength of, the enemy.

The strategy and tactics of the VPA can be understood only in the context of political doctrine. They adapted military strategy to their fundamental principle that they were fighting a liberation war, in which it was more important to win the minds of the people than their land. They paid the same painstaking attention to detail in planning propaganda campaigns--ranging from the training of hard-core, ideologically militant guerrillas to the broad indoctrination of the masses--that they did in planning military campaigns. And the goals were always the same: to win political allegiance and convert it into military support. The two were in fact inseparable in waging guerrilla warfare, for many of the military devices on which their guerrillas depended for success and survival required intelligence and reconnaissance services of the local population. These included ambush, surprise attack, espionage, sabotage, and advance preparation both for attack and retreat. One of their five principles of tactics, in fact, demanded the collaboration of the populace in all military actions.<sup>17</sup>

In fighting a political war, the Viet Minh had several factors in their favor from the outset. Their soldiers were native to the land, were used to the climate, knew the area in which they fought, and knew its people, their grievances, and discontents. They had been thoroughly imbued with the idea that theirs was a just cause, and one which would ultimately triumph. And perhaps one of their greatest advantages was the nature of the enemy. The French were waging war in an inhospitable climate, in a land covered with jungles, forests, mountains, and swamps, where they came as foreigners, as aggressors, as colonialists. They lacked a cause, an ideal to fight and die for, and a political-military organization capable of waging the kind of total war they were facing. In one sense, the French defeated themselves in Vietnam.

## THE COUNTERINSURGENT RESPONSE

### Politics in France and Vietnamese Nationalism

The French policy in Vietnam from 1945 to 1954 was both a product and a prisoner of metropolitan politics--and the political games played in Paris, especially in the first years after World War II, merit close scrutiny because of their effect on the course of events in Vietnam. In brief, from 1945 to 1947 a succession of weak, unstable governments, composed of disparate elements and unable to formulate coherent policies or arrive at clearly defined goals, was powerless to prevent a strong-willed and highly motivated High Commissioner in Saigon from sabotaging any modus vivendi with the Viet Minh. And even after d'Argenlieu's removal, no viable alternative was offered Vietnamese nationalists. Paris's vacillating policies and, above all, the unwillingness of the generals and colonial administrators on the spot to transfer any substantial powers to Bao Dai's government, doomed it as a puppet regime from the start.

The extent to which France was ignorant of the turn of events in Vietnam in 1945 and the depth of nationalist sentiment in the countryside can be gauged by the type of readjustment in relations which De Gaulle, on record at the 1944 Free French Brazzaville Conference against the dissolution of the French Empire, offered the former colony; he proposed a Federation composed of the five states in Indochina, presided over by a French Governor-General whose powers would be enhanced at the expense of the ministries in Paris. This was a move toward local autonomy but woefully inadequate to meet an explosive situation in which the Vietnamese were already experiencing the taste of freedom and self-government.

The "August Revolution" of 1945 brought the Viet Minh to power in the north, where they soon had to contend with Chinese occupying forces and their Vietnamese "protégés." In the south, the French military took control of Saigon, with British help, and General Leclerc began the pacification of Cochinchina. Meanwhile, the newly appointed French High Commissioner, Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, former Carmelite monk and staunch Gaullist<sup>18</sup> supporter of France's oversea position, embarked on his campaign to conserve France's interests in Vietnam.

Having been entrusted by De Gaulle with the reconquest of Indochina, General Leclerc pondered the possibilities of re-establishing French authority in the north. He concluded that France would have to make a political accommodation with both

the Chinese occupying army and the Viet Minh or resort to large-scale war, which would necessitate a much greater military commitment than France appeared willing to make. Admiral d'Argenlieu was stricken at the idea of negotiating with a revolutionary government dedicated to achieving independence and sought to undermine Leclerc's position by labeling it "capitulationist."<sup>19</sup> But De Gaulle resigned from the French government on January 20, 1946, and French policy in Vietnam hung fire. A Socialist took over the presidency of the Provisional Government and Marius Moutet, also a Socialist, replaced the Gaullist Jacques Soustelle as Minister of Overseas France. For the moment, a "liberal" policy won out, and the French negotiated the Chinese withdrawal and an accord with the Viet Minh recognizing the DRV as a "free state." But expectations of a peaceful solution proved illusory, as d'Argenlieu achieved in Saigon what he could not attain in Paris. He ruined any possible understanding between the Viet Minh and France by encouraging separatist tendencies in Cochinchina. His "hard line" was supported in Paris by the Interministerial Committee on Indochina, led by Georges Bidault, an MRP leader who was conservative in colonial affairs and who figured prominently in formulation of policy for Vietnam until the Geneva Conference.

The French elections of June 2, 1946, had resulted in a victory for the MRP and strengthened the hand of Bidault and d'Argenlieu. While Ho Chi Minh was en route to France for the Fontainebleau Conference, which opened on July 6, d'Argenlieu unilaterally recognized the Republic of Cochinchina as a "free state."<sup>20</sup> The Fontainebleau Conference, the penultimate intergovernmental meeting between the Viet Minh and France, ended in failure and d'Argenlieu retained a free hand in Vietnam. He was aided once more by governmental instability in Paris. On October 13, the French people voted in a referendum to adopt a constitution for the Fourth French Republic, but the results were clouded by an inconclusive vote in which 8,000,000 abstained. In the elections for a new National Assembly, held the following month, the three major parties won more than 70% of the total vote. But this time the Communists edged out the MRP to regain their position as France's "first party," while the Socialists suffered a severe setback. Yet a deadlock over the formation of a three-party cabinet resulted in a temporary compromise solution: a one-party Socialist cabinet took office, headed by the venerable Leon Blum. It was too late to impose a Socialist policy on Saigon, however, for on December 19, 1946, the day after Blum became Premier, the conflict began in Hanoi and spread throughout the country. Blum failed to reopen negotiations and d'Argenlieu convinced Blum's envoy, Marius Moutet, that the Viet Minh threat could be crushed by military means. D'Argenlieu was not removed from office until the end of February 1947; his successor, Emile Bollaert, was not

instructed to reopen negotiations with the Viet Minh. Instead, the outlines of a new policy were beginning to emerge from both Saigon and the MRP.<sup>21</sup> Following the expulsion of the Communists from the French Cabinet in May 1947, the way was cleared for exploration of the possibility of coming to terms with Vietnamese non-Communist nationalists headed by the ex-Emperor Bao Dai.

French negotiations with Bao Dai, which dragged on for years, were characterized by the patent unwillingness of the government to concede any of the attributes of sovereignty and transfer any real authority to a Vietnamese regime, especially while there appeared the slightest likelihood of a solution by force of arms. In December 1947, High Commissioner Bollaert persuaded Bao Dai, who was then living in Hong Kong, to re-enter Vietnamese politics; and, following months of negotiations, he signed the Ha Long Bay agreements in June 1948. This agreement recognized Vietnam's independence, but so hedged it with military, political, economic, and administrative restrictions that many anti-Viet Minh nationalists were unwilling to enter a government based on it. Bao Dai subsequently renounced the accord and declined to return to Vietnam until France agreed to grant his government greater freedom in internal affairs as well as to unequivocally recognize Vietnam's unity. His moderate demands were finally met, and the Elysée Accords of June 1949 gave Vietnam at least some of the outward symbols of independence. Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina were at last to be recognized as unified, and Vietnam joined the French Union as an Associated State. The new Vietnamese government, now with Bao Dai as Chief of State, was permitted its own army and police force and took over many administrative functions. Yet no real transfer of power took place; the French military controlled the Vietnamese army, French nationals retained their privileged status, and their economic interests were protected by the agreement. Furthermore, fiscal policy continued in French hands, with the Vietnamese piaster tied to the French franc, and the Banque d'Indochine supervising the transfer of monies. Thus, the "Bao Dai solution" as a rallying point for non-Communist nationalists foundered on the rock of French intransigence. To compete with the Viet Minh, Bao Dai had to offer as much if not more than Ho Chi Minh, and this the French could not, or would not, grant. Unless France's military might was withdrawn from the country, real power would reside with the French, and the Vietnamese continued to view the war in terms of nationalism versus colonialism.



### French Military and Political Machinery in Vietnam

If the French political parties were unwilling to cede to the Vietnamese government that modicum of sovereignty and power necessary for its survival, they were equally unwilling to provide the military command in Vietnam with the means to achieve a military victory. One by one, France's most prestigious generals --Leclerc, Valluy, Blaizot, Carpentier, DeLattre, Salan, Navarre, Ely--left their reputations badly tarnished on that inhospitable battleground, unable to perform the miracle demanded of them: victory without cost. And in the end, they had to settle for defeat without surrender. The tragic confusion surrounding policy-formulation in Paris<sup>22</sup> was compounded by the absence of any clear-cut lines of authority from Paris to Saigon, from civilian to military command, even from one theater of operation to another.<sup>23</sup> In order to avoid the necessity of fighting an acknowledged war in Vietnam, in which draftees would have to be used, the government maintained the fiction that this was officially a pacification operation and therefore the job of a professional army. Furthermore, responsibility for overall military direction was entrusted neither to the Minister of National Defense nor the General Staff; instead, it was the Minister of Overseas France (changed in 1950 to that of the Associated States) who assumed direction of the armed forces in Indochina. He represented the Premier, although he acted under instruction of the government through the Committee of National Defense. What this meant in fact was that the Minister of Overseas France could exercise a reasonably autonomous power as long as he did not openly contravene the given policy of any particular government at a particular time. The Minister of National Defense served primarily as a channel to furnish troops and arms for the military effort in Indochina; his policy-making power was equal only to that of any other members of the Committee of National Defense.

Authority in Vietnam was divided between a High Commissioner --a civilian (or military man) representing the French Republic in Indochina--and a Commander in Chief, who was charged with executing operational plans. The military commander had little or no freedom of action, since he had to secure approval from the Ministry of National Defense for his strategy.<sup>24</sup> Only in December 1950, when faced with a serious military defeat and an atmosphere of panic, did the Plevan government agree to cede to one man--General DeLattre de Tassigny--the dual functions, but on his death, the civilian position was again separated from the military.<sup>25</sup>

In 1953, the French Expeditionary Corps was composed of approximately 175,000 regular army troops (54,000 Frenchmen; 30,000 North Africans; 18,000 Africans; 20,000 Legionnaires; 50,000 Indochinese), 5,000 in the navy, and 10,000 in the air force.<sup>26</sup> The Expeditionary Corps was a professional volunteer army, since French law forbade the sending of conscripts to Indochina. Ground troops were divided into some 90 to 100 infantry battalions, whose main task was securing and maintaining the major roads, lines of communications, and population centers. Thus only a small percentage were available for waging mobile warfare, although, as the war progressed, efforts were made to adapt the army to the needs of counter guerrilla warfare, and small units of guerrillas and commandos were formed. But Navarre claims that when he took over command only 10% of the forces were strategically mobile.

Beginning in 1950, when the tides of war turned against the French and the Indochinese situation was feeling the repercussion of international events, it was belatedly recognized that Vietnamese soldiers were far better equipped psychologically than Europeans to undertake the task of permanent pacification. One of the weaknesses of French strategy was that mopping-up operations were of necessity hit-and-run ventures, and there was no possibility of consolidating the gains made in the military field and turning them to political advantage. Thus a project to free French troops for military action by enlarging the size and responsibilities of the Vietnamese National Army was canvassed and accepted. It was projected that American arms would be forthcoming to equip these forces, now that the Korean War had brought the United States to the forefront of the Communist-containment policy. Not until May 1, 1952, however, was a General Staff for the Vietnamese army created,<sup>27</sup> although by January 1 of that year, the Vietnamese army supposedly comprised 150,000 men. Only in 1953 was the Vietnamese army given a separate mission; Vietnamese troops continued to be considered auxiliaries of French forces and were placed under the command of French officers.

Some attempt was made to put Vietnamese militia in charge of specific territories, and this was most successful in Cochinchina, where the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and a Catholic militia under the command of a Eurasian, Colonel Leroy, undertook to maintain security in their respective fiefs. Leroy especially was able to rally the population of Ben Tre Province to his cause and was a prototype of the kind of leader who could fight the Viet Minh on their own terms and win. According to his own account, Leroy not only had to contend with unsympathetic French officers, but also with jealousies among his Vietnamese colleagues.<sup>28</sup>

The year 1950, which brought the acquisition of power by the Chinese Communists, marked a turning point in the military situation in Vietnam, for after this time it is questionable that the French Expeditionary Corps, even with an enormous increase in commitment in Vietnam, could have imposed a military victory in Vietnam. Certainly, the additional Chinese support after the Korean cease-fire took effect made a French military victory most doubtful. The cold war arena had reached and embraced the Vietnamese theater of operations, and military assistance from Communist China and the United States changed the complexion of the conflict--and its possibilities. To understand the significance of this internationalization, it is necessary to recapitulate briefly the train of military events which brought Vietnam to this situation and to examine the key battles which would thereafter bring France to Geneva.

#### The War: Strategy and Tactics

It took General Leclerc only four months to re-establish the French "presence" in Cochinchina in 1946, but the core problem of pacification remained: he had neither the men nor the means to plant political and military administration in the villages. When the Viet Minh took to the hills in North Vietnam, the French army rapidly cleared the Hanoi-Haiphong delta area and launched a mopping-up operation in Central Vietnam. But Leclerc recognized that it would take 500,000 men to liquidate the "insurrection."<sup>29</sup> Despite political boasts that "there is no longer a military problem in Indochina,"<sup>30</sup> the ease with which the French troops reoccupied territory depended to a large extent on the Viet Minh tactic of disappearing from the scene in the face of superior enemy concentrations. What the French found out later was that they were merely regrouping and awaiting a favorable situation to employ those guerrilla tactics at which they excelled, especially the ambush and surprise attack of French military convoys.

Another French offensive in the fall of 1947, spearheaded by paratroopers who were dropped into the strategic Cac Bang-Lang Son area at the Chinese border, also carried with it an illusion of success. The Viet Minh were badly mauled in their mountain stronghold and important military stores were destroyed. But once more the French army withdrew to the delta after a three-month campaign, without having delivered the final blow, and the VPA returned to take possession. This remained the pattern for the next two years, since the French government failed to provide the reinforcements needed to win the war by force of arms.

Mao's army arrived on the Tonkinese border in the late summer of 1949. Facing it was a series of dispersed French forts, manned by some 10,000 troops separated from the French delta strongholds by about 300 miles of Communist-held jungle.<sup>31</sup> A confidential report made in 1949 by General Revers, Chief of the French General Staff, had advised that the Red River delta area be strengthened, and that isolated French outposts such as Cao Bang and Lang Son be withdrawn because of tenuous lines of communication and the difficulty of reinforcing or supplying the garrisons if they were attacked.<sup>32</sup> But the Revers report was never implemented, because it was considered politically important to maintain a French presence among mountain tribes and because the report had been leaked to the French press and become involved in a French political scandal. So a major part of the French forces in Tonkin were tied to this static defense system when Giap decided, in October 1950, to move to Phase 2 of guerrilla warfare.

During the preceding year, Giap had steadily enlarged his main force to include just over 60 battalions. These were grouped into divisions of about 10,000 men, consisting of four regiments, each subdivided into three battalions of approximately 1,000 men. Despite the Viet Minh buildup, the French Cabinet decided--for internal political reasons centering around its unwillingness to send conscripts to Vietnam--to reduce General Carpentier's forces by 9,000 French soldiers.

When the rains ceased in October 1950, Giap began to attack the forts one by one. First to fall was Dong Khe, where Giap deployed approximately four Viet Minh battalions, outnumbering the defenders by about eight to one.<sup>33</sup> On October 3, it was decided to evacuate Cao Bang, and its garrison of 1,500 tried to link up with a relief column of 3,500 and make it to Lang Son. The Cao Bang column was ambushed, and the relief column was likewise attacked and destroyed. When the dust settled, the French had lost over 4,000 troops--and in fact lost a total of 6,000 during the border fighting--and enormous stocks of ammunition, weapons, and vehicles.<sup>34</sup> The loss of Cao Bang breached the dyke. In a precipitous action, Lang Son was successfully evacuated, but the defenders had to leave behind their stocks of guns, mortars, ammunition, and food. This first large-scale Viet Minh victory reflected the insurgents' extreme mobility, precise knowledge of the terrain, and mastery of the surprise attack, as well as their advantages of numerical superiority and the benefits of Chinese materiel and training. Most of all, it was a tragic result of the French military tendency to underestimate the enemy and consider them incapable of assimilating modern methods of warfare.<sup>35</sup>

The French government was finally shocked into action: some reinforcements were sent, and on December 6, 1950, General DeLattre de Tassigny was appointed to head both the civil and military establishments, a unified authority which permitted him great freedom of action. He was able to halt the panic among civilians in Vietnam by the force of his personality; he countermanded plans to evacuate women and children to France, and instead drafted civilians to perform nonmilitary duties. And he stopped the Viet Minh push toward the delta by personally taking charge of a battle at a small post at Vinh Yen, on the route to Hanoi. DeLattre mobilized all available resources to defend Vinh Yen, bringing in troops from Cochinchina through a veritable airlift.<sup>36</sup> He also sent massive waves of planes using napalm bombs<sup>37</sup> against the enemy's infantry assaults, and finally forced them to break off the attack. The Viet Minh, using "human wave" tactics in a desperate attempt to overwhelm the garrison, had suffered enormous losses, reaching 6,000 killed and 500 prisoners.<sup>38</sup> Giap's offensive to gain Hanoi and push the French out of Tonkin had received a temporary but severe setback, and he decided to revert to his previously successful tactics of guerrilla warfare. The battle demonstrated that French airpower and firepower, when used in favorable terrain and in conjunction with a determined defense, could win out against Viet Minh numerical superiority. The story was to be different when, three years later, the Viet Minh would attack another entrenched camp. This time, the terrain would favor the attackers, and French air superiority would give way before Viet Minh superiority in heavy artillery.

DeLattre died on January 11, 1952, and the history of the French military effort in Vietnam became one of slow but steady withdrawals in the face of Viet Minh pressures. General Salan, who succeeded DeLattre, inherited his system of static forts to defend the delta, but instead of using them as points of departure for mobile warfare, as DeLattre had supposedly intended, Salan had the majority of his troops tied up in defensive positions. Salan's successor, General Navarre, who took over in May 1953, found some 100,000 French Union troops garrisoning the posts in the Red River delta. While the Viet Minh could field an operational force equivalent to nine divisions, the French Union forces had the equivalent of less than three divisions free, including seven mobile groups and eight paratrooper battalions.<sup>39</sup>

It is questionable whether, even with support from Paris, Navarre could have held the Viet Minh to a standstill in the north. In retrospect, however, it is clear that the military responsibility for deciding to fortify and hold at all costs the town of Dien Bien Phu does rest with him and that this was a strategic error of the first magnitude.<sup>40</sup> The military aspects of the battle have been



examined exhaustively elsewhere, sometimes skillfully, sometimes sensationally. But several points bear repeating. Dien Bien Phu was not the third--and decisive--act in the drama of war, but was rather the third-act curtain. France had lost the war and agreed to negotiations at Geneva well before the battle was joined. And the agonizing defeat served up to France at Dien Bien Phu was the more brutal for being avoidable. General Navarre actually courted an encounter with the Viet Minh there, although earlier experience clearly indicated the impossibility of holding a static camp in inaccessible mountainous country surrounded by hostile troops. But the overconfidence exhibited by the military command in 1947 --when they expected to eliminate the "primitive" guerrilla forces with ease--never dissipated even in the face of VPA victories, nor did the disastrous tendency to underestimate the enemy's military capacities.

But most of all, France's failure in Vietnam was political not military. When the war began in 1946, the Viet Minh in the north appeared to rally a near monopoly of the patriotism of almost all Vietnamese, as the anti-French, anti-colonialist organization dedicated to the cause of Vietnamese independence and hopefully capable of bringing it to victory. For more than a year, the Viet Minh had ruled in name over all of Vietnam, heading a government sanctioned by the ex-Emperor and recognized--however hedged in legalistic terms--by France. Although it would have served France's military interests to draw support away from this enemy regime, the government failed to establish a viable alternative. French dealings with Bao Dai demonstrated an inability, or unwillingness, to understand the upsurge of Vietnamese nationalism and to respond to it by granting real independence of action to a Vietnamese government which would include nationalists not committed to a French presence. The desire to maintain French hegemony also superseded the attempt to rally popular support around the military effort, and obtain intelligence and reconnaissance assistance from a sympathetic peasantry. Just as the politicians were wary of an independent policy, the military establishment was mistrustful of an independent Vietnamese army. Thus the war was lost, a war of colonial reconquest in the eyes of most Vietnamese. Neither Communist nor nationalist tears were shed when the French were at long last driven out of Vietnam.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Conceptual Considerations

Any comprehensive analysis of guerrilla warfare--its techniques, its potentialities, its limitations, and the reasons for



success or failure of particular guerrilla struggles--should include some systematic consideration of the socio-economic-political context within which guerrilla movements develop. Political context here includes the identities or similarities in the philosophies of social order and the theory and conduct of warfare held by the leading participants. There are enough similarities between the environments from which successful guerrilla movements (e.g., the Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists) have emerged to suggest that a certain mix of social, economic, and political factors constitutes a necessary--though not a sufficient--condition for the emergence of a guerrilla movement that is to have any chance of progressing much beyond the stage of sporadic, more or less politically inspired, antipower activity. This thesis becomes even more persuasive when we consider that similar conditions were present in the case of guerrilla movements which, though not ultimately successful, were able to develop into potent forces and serious political threats (e.g., the ELAS movement in post-World War II Greece, the Hukbalahaps in the Philippines, and the Communist insurgents who created the 1948-1960 "Emergency" in Malaya). An important common denominator of these movements is their origin in or derivation from what has become a coherent body of doctrine created, or adapted, or adopted by Communists the world over.

In this realm, it is misleading to define, or think of, the guerrilla as one who is operating against "established forces of law and order." In any situation in which the forces of law and order may accurately be described as "established," one is unlikely to find a dangerous, let alone successful, guerrilla movement. Without some internally or externally induced breakdown in the scope, pattern, and effectiveness of "established" order, no guerrilla movement is likely to survive.

The French experience in Indochina is very much a case in point. From the turn of the century until, say, March 1940, French rule in Indochina could be fairly described as "established," that is, it had effective sovereignty or power. There was considerable political discontent and unrest during this period, but uprisings (e.g., the Yen Bay rising of the VNQDD and subsequent Communist attempts to set up "soviets" in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An) were abortive and put down by the French authorities with relative ease. The situation was entirely different when the Viet Minh made their long-planned, carefully prepared, and doctrinally based move in December 1946. Defeat in Europe and Japanese conquest in Indochina did irreparable damage to French prestige, damage which irrevocably shattered the French social order in Vietnam. The precipitate Japanese surrender of August 1945 and its confused aftermath, including the conflict of views over

colonialism, produced a collapse in central authority and a situation of near anarchy without which the Indochinese Communist Party probably could not have gained absolute control over the nationalist movement or readied itself for the struggle ahead. Indeed, when French forces first attempted to return to North Vietnam, the Viet Minh constituted "established authority," not the French. The Communist-led guerrillas of the Viet Minh, in short, were operating in a social, economic, and political context radically different from that which had prevailed when the VNQDD made its move at Yen Bay in 1930. This altered context is not the least of the reasons why the Yen Bay rising now rates but a passing reference in specialist histories, whereas the Viet Minh movement led to the expulsion of the French and the creation of a new political regime. And this in turn leads to the necessity for considering the Communist theory and practice--the old Leninist conjunction--of all types of warfare, including "guerrilla" warfare.

### The Factor of Terrain

The type of guerrilla movement that develops into a force capable of imposing its political writ and wishes on a significantly large piece of territory and body of people is vitally dependent on terrain considerations, particularly considerations that negate the guerrilla's adversaries' resources in modern weaponry and firepower (e.g., armor and air support). Even urban guerrilla activity (as in Ireland and Israel), is not independent of terrain. Urban geography, in a very real tactical sense, involves three-dimensional terrain (buildings, alleys, warrens, sewer systems, etc.) which the terrorist guerrilla can put to good use and which he ignores at his peril. Urban environments can provide a populace into which the guerrilla fighter can blend and certainly can provide a terrain setting in which the guerrilla's opponents find it difficult to gain the full benefit of superior weaponry.

Terrain was a crucial factor in the 1945-1954 Indochina struggle and significantly influenced that struggle's final outcome. The densely foliated and rugged areas of the Viet Bac and the T'ai Zone provided the Viet Minh with redoubts in which they were relatively safe from aerial surveillance and into which heavily equipped French forces could not penetrate with ease. When they did attempt such penetrations, the terrain greatly favored the guerrilla defenders rather than the French attackers. The paddy fields of the densely populated delta areas (in both North and South Vietnam) confined French armor to the roads and made it easy prey to ambush. The limited rail and road net of Indochina facilitated guerrilla sabotage and made successful interdiction

particularly damaging. Ambushes were easy to lay with good withdrawal routes for the guerrilla forces. The guerrillas could be confident that French Union relief forces had to come to the point of attack by one of a very few available relief routes and the routes, in turn, were susceptible to further guerrilla harassment. Terrain factors, including vegetation and foliage, minimized the risk of large guerrilla forces being caught in the open where they would be vulnerable to artillery, armor, or air strikes. The type of slashing, thrusting deployment of armor and motorized infantry by which the tide of battle could be turned on the plains of northern Europe was simply not physically possible in Vietnam. (During the crucial battle for Route 19 in the late spring of 1954, for example, Viet Minh troops were actually able to move faster through the jungle than Group Mobile 100 was able to move by road.) Generalization from one instance is a rightly suspect intellectual process; but in Vietnam, at least, terrain was crucial. The fact that the Viet Minh made better use of it than the French was not the least of the reasons why they won.

#### Terminological Problems

The current study addresses the general problem of "isolating the guerrilla." It approaches this problem through a series of case studies, including this one, which treats "Recent French Experience in Vietnam, 1945-1954." But here we must be careful, for the French experience is only in part a case study in guerrilla warfare. The Viet Minh started as guerrillas, but as early as 1950 it would have been, and was, an error to discuss or think of them as primarily a "guerrilla" force. (This is an error the French persisted in making and it cost them dearly.) The precise point at which guerrillas cease to be guerrillas and become something else--insurgents, say, or perhaps a rebel army--is impossible to define and not worth quibbling over. In 1947 the Viet Minh were primarily guerrillas; in 1951 they were not. Somewhere around 1950 they passed over this ill-defined but all-important line.

As early as February 1950 General Giap (the Viet Minh military commander) announced that the guerrilla stage of the struggle was over and the war of movement had begun. In May 1950, the French frontier post of Lao Kay was overrun by a coordinated five-battalion Viet Minh assault (roughly equal in scale to the largest operations the Viet Cong have attempted until 1965). In September 1950, Dong Yhe fell to a Viet Minh assault involving about 14 battalions in coordinated attack. In October 1950, a 6,600-man French Union force was decimated while withdrawing from Cao Bang

by a Viet Minh force of about 18,000 men. By 1951, the Viet Minh had more than three organic and operating divisions. In January 1952, a coordinated three-division Viet Minh assault compelled a French Union force of over 20,000 men to withdraw from the Hoa Binh area. By May 1953, the Viet Minh had seven regular infantry divisions, with independent regiments equivalent in aggregate strength to about two more (i.e., an operating equivalent of about nine divisions).

An insurgent force capable of mounting a coordinated 14-battalion attack can no longer be accurately described as a "guerrilla" force. A force which disposes of nine divisions certainly cannot be so described. The Viet Minh continued to use guerrillas effectively as adjuncts and auxiliaries, but by 1951 the Viet Minh itself was something more than a guerrilla movement. It had become a state at war, with allies, capable of mounting the kind of forces a state is capable of mounting.

#### The Factor of Isolation

All of the factors noted above bear on our central problem of "isolating the guerrilla," though the concept of "isolation" and its bearing on guerrilla activity both need some further conceptual refinement if the true lessons of the 1945-1954 French experience are to be clearly seen. There are really two types of isolation to consider: external and internal. Both affect not only a guerrilla movement's ability to survive, but even more importantly, its ability to grow and develop into something larger, an insurgent force capable of inflicting military defeats on its adversaries severe enough to force a political resolution favorable to the (initially) guerrilla movement's objectives.

External isolation (a concept which includes the problem of sanctuary) relates to a counter guerrilla force's ability or inability to deny a guerrilla movement support from beyond the political boundaries of the country or region to which the guerrilla movement is indigenous and within which it is competing for political authority. The Viet Minh and Viet Cong forces have always enjoyed such sanctuaries, which of course limits the concept of isolation.

Internal isolation relates to a counter guerrilla force's ability or inability to deny a guerrilla movement support from within the political boundaries of the country or region to which the guerrilla movement is indigenous and within which it is competing for political authority.

The notions of survival and growth, so far as a guerrilla movement is concerned, are obviously interrelated, but should not be confused. Survival involves a guerrilla movement's ability to transcend the harassment and disruption stage and become an insurgent force capable of coping with regular troops in positional battle and forcing a favorable political resolution. None of these terms are very precise, of course, nor are the concepts they label sharply differentiated. As suggested above, it is fruitless to quibble over the precise point at which politically motivated "bandits" become "guerrillas" or the point at which "guerrillas" become "insurgents." It is essential to realize, however, that by their very nature, guerrilla movements must possess a certain dynamism if they are to survive. Hence it is probably the case that survival over an extended period of time (say more than three years) is unlikely unless the guerrilla movement in question is able to grow. By the nature of the case, a guerrilla movement cannot last unless it is able to project and retain some aura of momentum which keeps up the morale of its adherents, cows its local adversaries, and induces the prudent to reinsure their future by giving it some modicum of support.

#### External Isolation--The French Experience

External support was of considerable, perhaps crucial, importance in the persistence, growth, and eventual success of the Viet Minh in its 1945-1954 struggle. This support came from various quarters and took various forms, including diplomatic and propaganda support from the Soviet Union (after 1950), propaganda assistance and some sympathetic action from throughout the world Communist movement (then reasonably monolithic), and assistance of various kinds from the French domestic left, including especially the French Communist Party. The latter was helpful in a variety of ways, including the exertion of political pressure on successive metropolitan governments, the conduct of unremitting overt and covert propaganda and agitation against continuation of the war, and the actual sabotage on the docks or at the factory of materiel destined for the French Union forces in Indochina. This kind of assistance and the political climate of opinion it helped to produce, coupled with more or less genuinely spontaneous sympathy for the Viet Minh's "nationalist" aspirations in many quarters of the world, including the United States, weighed heavily in the Viet Minh's political and strategic calculations.

The most significant and certainly the most indispensable support for the Viet Minh, however, came from Communist China (after 1949). In fact, it is extremely doubtful whether the Viet



Minh movement could have ever gone beyond the harassment guerrilla stage without Chinese Communist assistance. Even if there were not a wealth of other evidence, the mere temporal sequence of events highlights their causal connection. The Chinese Communists extended their writ to the Indochina border in late 1949; early in 1950 the Viet Minh military capabilities (as indicated above) began to increase in quantum jumps. In the spring of 1953, Peiping was largely relieved of the drain on its attention and resources occasioned by the Korean War; soon thereafter the intensity of Viet Minh military pressure began to increase noticeably and little more than a year later the Viet Minh had won a military position sufficient to impose a favorable political solution of the conflict. The Chinese Communists gave the Viet Minh sanctuary, facilities for recuperation, and the kind of extensive training necessary to develop regular forces. The Chinese provided instructors, advisers, and technical assistance of various kinds, including some specialist units (e.g., signals and artillery). They also provided considerable material assistance, including, eventually, all-important items such as heavy weapons and the artillery which sealed the fate of Dien Bien Phu. They did not provide large numbers of troops, but these the Viet Minh did not need and apparently did not want. (Evidence on this very important topic is sparse and not particularly reliable, but there are grounds for thinking that although some Viet Minh leaders, such as Truong Chinh, were anxious to employ Chinese troops, they were overruled by others, including Giap and Ho himself.)

The French obviously did not succeed in isolating the Viet Minh from such external support. In fact, they not only made no attempt to do so but, instead, wrote off the frontier region to their adversaries without attempting to hold or contest it. Once Communist control over China had been firmly established, the French High Command decided that the frontier was indefensible and made the strategic decision to withdraw toward the Red River delta. In the short run, this decision was the immediate cause of the French defeat at Lang Son and the debacle of Cao Bang--probably the worst military disaster in the whole history of French colonial warfare. Of themselves these battles were important because of their effects on the morale of the combatants and because of the rich store of supplies that were lost to the Viet Minh. Over the longer term, the strategic decision responsible for these disasters made it impossible for the French to crush the Viet Minh on the field of battle and hence in no small measure helped seal France's fate in Indochina. So long as the Viet Minh had relatively uninhibited access to Chinese sanctuary and succor, it is unlikely that any combination of luck or tactics could have enabled the French to win a military victory. With a French military victory rendered improbable, the eventual political outcome was almost inevitable.



### Internal Isolation--The French Experience

On the matter of internal support, the 1945-1954 French experience in Vietnam provides a virtual textbook catalog of errors to avoid. Throughout the 1945-1954 struggle, the population of Vietnam, particularly the peasantry, provided the Viet Minh with a constant and increasing source of recruits, labor (e.g., porters), intelligence, supplies (e.g., food), and concealment. Without this support from the Vietnamese people, the Viet Minh movement could never have survived. Along with Chinese Communist external assistance, this indigenous support was one of the prime ingredients of the eventual Communist victory. Not only did the French never succeed in isolating the Viet Minh guerrillas from these sources of indigenous assistance; basic French attitudes toward Indochina actually led to the adoption of political, strategic, and tactical courses of action that virtually insured a continuing close relationship between the Viet Minh movement and the people of Vietnam. To the end French colonial policy failed to understand how to provide some future for bona fide Vietnamese nationalism.

On the Viet Minh side, the importance of popular assistance was recognized in practice and constitutes the theme of a vast amount of doctrinal literature. The whole pattern of Communist strategy--i.e., the strategy of the Indochinese Communist Party which guided its take-over of the nationalist cause and its conduct of the struggle against the French--was based on the belief that an armed uprising against French colonial authority could not succeed without the organized support of a broad mass movement of peasants and urban "bourgeois." It was, in fact, this strategic concept which dictated the emphasis on "nationalism" and concealment of the true extent of Communist direction and control. The Viet Minh movement generated a mystique that drew its strength from the Communist leadership's success in identifying the Viet Minh (itself a "front" structure) with popular sentiments of a desire for independence and relief from specific grievances of French administration. Tactically, the Viet Minh laid continuing emphasis on organized participation in the Viet Minh cause by virtually the whole population. The keys here were both organization and participation. The organization went to the lowest level, including family groups in the humblest village. Participation touched all sectors of society and all age groups: little children reported intelligence or carried messages, youths served as guides or participated in local terrorism harassment forays, women tended the sick or acted as couriers, farmers provided food or served as porters, young men served in regular or irregular forces, students acted as informants, couriers, or part-time terrorists. Whole villages participated in the building of defenses, cutting of roads,

or laying of booby-traps. Total involvement--and hence total complicity--was the watchword. Viet Minh methods were thorough and, on the whole, successful.

Viet Minh methods were actually abetted, not hindered, by French behavior, from basic political attitudes to the detailed conduct of tactical operations.

In the political field, one could argue that the French lost Indochina at the Brazzaville Conference convened by the French Committee for National Liberation in January 1944 to lay down the principles that were to govern future relations between France and its overseas empire after the end of World War II. The essence of future French policy for Indochina enunciated by General de Gaulle was summarized in the preamble of that conference's political recommendations, which stated:

. . . the aims of the work of civilization which France is accomplishing in her possessions exclude any idea of autonomy and any possibility of development outside the French Empire bloc. The attainment of "self-government" in the colonies, even in the most distant future, must be excluded.

France never substantially altered this policy (which, indeed, continued to influence its relationships with the RVN even after 1954). French intransigence on even considering the possibility of ultimate Vietnamese independence made it impossible for France to forge an effective Vietnamese political counter to the Viet Minh and, for that matter, made the French prevent the Vietnamese from forming any truly nationalist anti-Communist political mechanism on their own. This attitude put anti-Communist Vietnamese nationalists in an agonizing and virtually untenable position. It handed the cause of Vietnamese nationalism to the Viet Minh, made the latter the symbol of political aspirations felt throughout broad segments of Vietnamese society, and helped cement the bond between the Viet Minh movement and the Vietnamese people. As much as any other single factor, this basic political attitude cost France the war.

In the realm of actual counterinsurgency operations, French strategy was defensive and French tactics were shaped accordingly. The French relied on the fort, the strongpoint, and the interlocking "hedgehog" of fixed positions. Accordingly, the Viet Minh had virtually uninterrupted access to the bulk of the Vietnamese peasantry, who did not reside in these forts or strongpoints. Such continued access gave the Viet Minh constant opportunities not only for proselytizing, but also for punishment of the recalcitrant or uncooperative. Even those who may not have wished to cooperate

with the Viet Minh were forced to do so; for French tactical practice made it impossible to protect the safety of villagers and farmers who opposed the Viet Minh or might have wanted to aid the French.

French political attitudes and strategic and tactical doctrine, in short, not only failed to "isolate the guerrilla," but virtually forced the populace into his arms. Under such circumstances, the Viet Minh movement was able to survive, to grow, and to win, particularly since its doctrine, message, and organization were all carefully tailored to take maximum advantage of such opportunities.

### Brief Chronology\*

#### 1945

- Mar. 9 The Japanese coup in Vietnam, taking over from the French.
- Mar. 24 France proposes an Indochina Federation for the five states of Indochina and a French Union to bind it to France.
- Aug. 14-  
Aug. 15 Bao Dai is granted independence of a unified Vietnam by the Japanese. Japan surrenders.
- Aug. 13-  
Aug. 16 Viet Minh Congress approves August insurrection, names Ho President of a provisional government.
- Aug. 24 Bao Dai abdicates in favor of DRV.
- Aug. 25 Committee of the South formed.
- Sep. 12 Vietnam declaration of independence.
- Sep. 12 British troops enter Saigon.
- Sep.-  
Oct. Chinese occupy Vietnam north of 16th parallel.
- Oct. French troops take over in Saigon from the British.
- Oct. 25 French offensive against Viet Minh in the south begins.
- Nov. Dissolution of the ICP and formation of Marxist Study Group.

#### 1946

- Jan. 6 Elections to DRV National Assembly: Viet Minh wins 230 seats.

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\*Based on Allan B. Cole, op. cit., pp. 245-256.

1946 (cont.)

- Jan. 20 De Gaulle resigns as Premier.
- Feb. 28 French agreement with Chinese to withdraw by March 31.
- Mar. 2 First session of DRV National Assembly. Ho elected President.
- Mar. 6 DRV accord with France, signed by Sainteny and Ho Chi Minh. DRV a "free state" within French Union; French troops to return.
- Mar. 18 French troops enter Hanoi.
- May 27 The Vietnam National United Front (Lien Viet) is established.
- Jun. 1 D'Argenlieu recognized the "free republic" of Cochinchina.
- Jul. 6 Fontainebleau Conference begins.
- Sep. 14 Fontainebleau Conference ends and Ho signs modus vivendi with Moutet.
- Oct. 13 Constitution for Fourth Republic is accepted in referendum.
- Nov. 8 DRV Constitution adopted. National Assembly dissolves itself.
- Nov. 23 The French bombard Haiphong.
- Dec. 17- Fighting begins in Hanoi, spreading throughout Vietnam.  
Dec. 19
- Dec. 18 Leon Blum heads a Socialist government in France.
- Dec. 25 Moutet-Leclerc mission reports no negotiations with Viet Minh are possible.

1947

- Feb. 20 D'Argenlieu dismissed.
- Mar. 5 Emile Bollaert replaces D'Argenlieu as High Commissioner.
- Dec. 7 Bao Dai signs a preliminary agreement with Bollaert.

### 1948

- Jun. 5 Agreement between Bao Dai and Bollaert signed in Ha Long Bay.
- Oct. 20 Leon Pignon becomes High Commissioner for Indochina.

### 1949

- Mar. 8 Elysée agreement signed in Paris.
- Jun. 14 Bao Dai and Leon Pignon sign Elysée agreement.
- Dec. 16 Chinese Communist troops reach Vietnam's northern borders.

### 1950

- Jan. 19 The Peoples' Republic of China recognizes the DRV.
- Jan. 31 The Soviet Union recognizes the DRV.
- Feb. 7 The United States and United Kingdom recognize the State of Vietnam.
- Jun. Outbreak of the Korean War.
- Aug. 10 American war materials begin to arrive in Vietnam.
- Aug. 14 Decision of French Cabinet to reduce strength of Expeditionary Corps by 9,000 men.
- Oct. 3- Cao Bang evacuated, men ambushed in retreat, heavy  
Oct. 9 losses.
- Oct. 17- Lang Son evacuated in haste.  
Oct. 19
- Oct. The French abandon all posts along the Chinese border.
- Dec. 6 General DeLattre de Tassigny is appointed High Commissioner (replacing Pignon) and concurrently commander of French troops.
- Dec. 23 US military aid conventions with State of Vietnam.



### 1951

- Jan. 13- Battle of Vinh Yen checks Viet Minh advance on Red  
Jan. 14 River delta.
- Mar. 3 Vietnam Dang Lao Dong (Workers' Party) is founded.  
Viet Minh is merged into the Lien Viet.
- Nov.- Initial French success with offensive southwest of  
Dec. Hanoi but it is checked.

### 1952

- Jan. 11 General DeLattre dies.
- Jun. 3 Letourneau is made High Commissioner for Indochina.
- Oct.- Viet Minh offensive in Tonkin; French offensive in  
Nov. delta.

### 1953

- Apr. 13 Viet Minh invade northern Laos.
- May 8 General Henri Navarre becomes commander of troops in  
Indochina, replacing Salan.
- Jun. 26 A new government in Paris, headed by Joseph Laniel.
- Jul. 27 Korean Armistice Agreement is signed.
- Aug.-Sep. French military offensive in lower Tonkin in accord-  
Oct.-Nov. ance with the "Navarre Plan." It becomes bogged down.
- Nov. 20 French troops take Dien Bien Phu.
- Dec.-Jan. Viet Minh invasion of Laos.

### 1954

- Feb. 18 Big Four agree at Berlin to hold Geneva Conference on  
Korea and Indochina.
- Apr. 26 Geneva Conference opens.

1954 (cont.)

- Apr. 28      Joint Franco-Vietnamese declaration of total independence for Vietnam.
- May 8        Dien Bien Phu falls to the Vietnam People's Army.
- Jun. 3        General Ely is appointed High Commissioner for Indochina.
- Jun. 12      The Laniel government falls.
- Jun. 15      Ngo Dinh Diem becomes Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam.
- Jun. 17      Premier Mendes-France promises an honorable peace by July 20.
- Jun. 29      French troops begin evacuation of southern part of Red River delta.
- Jul. 21      Agreements are reached at Geneva.
- Oct. 9        The Viet Minh occupy Hanoi.

## Footnotes

1. Truong Chinh, "The August Revolution," Primer for Revolt: The Communist Takeover in Viet-Nam (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 14.

2. Text in Allan B. Cole, ed., Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945-1955 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 40-41. See also, The Vietnam Cultural Association for National Liberation, Factual Records of the Vietnam August Revolution, Hanoi, September, 1946.

3. For a detailed account of the fight led by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap to secure support for the March 6th accord, see Philippe Devillers, Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940 a 1952 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), pp. 228-231.

4. The MRP or Popular Republican Movement was a Catholic political party formed in 1945. It rapidly became France's largest non-Communist political party; Georges Bidault was its principal spokesman.

5. Devillers, op. cit., pp. 291-292.

6. Section Francaise de l'Internationale Ouvrière, or French Section of the Workers' International, was the official name of France's Socialist Party. After the Liberation, it was the third largest party, behind the Communists and the MRP. It supported a "liberal" but vacillating policy in Vietnam.

7. Its purpose was to attract those who refused to join the Viet Minh because of its Communist base. Le Thanh Khoi, Le Viet-Nam: Histoire et civilisation (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1955), p. 470.

8. Cole, op. cit., p. 99.

9. Jacques Dinfreville (Pseud.), L'Operation Indochine (Paris: Editions Inter-Nationales, 1953), pp. 44-45. Cf. Bernard B. Fall, Le Viet Minh: La Republique Democratique du Viet-Nam, 1945-1960 (Paris: Librairie Armand Cohn, 1960), pp. 185-189.

10. (Gen.) Vo Nguyen Giap, People's War, People's Army: The Viet Cong Insurrection Manual for Under-developed Countries (New

York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 120-122. Giap writes, "officers were provided with handbooks, The Political Commissar's Book or Political Work in the Army."

11. Quoted in George K. Tanham, Communist Revolutionary Warfare: The Vietminh in Indochina (New York: Praeger, 1961), p. 60.

12. It has been estimated, for example, that one Viet Minh division in a simple operation required about 40,000 porters to supply its minimum needs. Tanham, op. cit., p. 71.

13. (Gen.) Henri Navarre, Agonie de l'Indochine (Paris: Plon 1956), pp. 205-208.

14. Jean Chesneaux, Contribution a l'histoire de la nation vietnamienne (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1955), p. 288.

15. Fall, op. cit., pp. 195-196.

16. Giap, op. cit., p. 41c.

17. The other four principal tactics were: speed of movement, surprise, undermining enemy morale, and security of military forces. Tanham, op. cit., pp. 74-79.

18. Supporters of General Charles de Gaulle formed a right-wing "mass" movement, the Rassemblement du Peuple Francais (RPF or Rally of the French People) in 1947, under the leadership of Jacques Soustelle. It changed the balance of power in the National Assembly by drawing votes away from the MRP.

19. Devillers, op. cit., p. 212.

20. Ibid., p. 270.

21. Bollaert sent the able scholar-soldier Paul Mus on a negotiating mission to Ho Chi Minh in May 1947, but the preconditions for an armistice amounted to a Viet Minh surrender. Mus failed. Later, by September, the MRP had acquired in Paris effective direction of Indochinese policy. Any former notion of negotiations with the Viet Minh was securely stopped. See, Devillers, op. cit., pp. 389-390, and Lacoutre and Devillers, La Fin d'une guerre: Indo-Chine 1954, Paris, 1960, p. 21.

22. From 1945 to the Geneva Conference the DRV had a single President, Ho Chi Minh, and one commander in chief, Vo Nguyen Giap. During the same period, France had a succession of some 19 governments; there were 6 political chiefs in Indochina (d'Argenlieu, Bollaert, Pignon, DeLattre, Letourneau, Dejean) and 8 military chiefs.

23. A veritable maze of jealousy and competition among military commanders sapped the unity of direction of the military hierarchy. See Jules Roy, The Battle of Dienbienphu (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 153-154 and passim.

24. Dinfreville, op. cit., p. 54.

25. Navarre strongly protested these limitations on his freedom of action, op. cit., pp. 5-10.

26. Ibid. p. 46, n. 2.

27. André Francois Mercier, Faut-il Abandonner l'Indochine? (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1954), p. 185.

28. (Col.) Jean Leroy, Un Homme dans la Riziere (Paris: Editions de Paris, 1955), pp. 160-167.

29. Others were far more optimistic. General Valluy, who succeeded Leclerc as commander of the expeditionary corps on July 18, 1946, considered 130,000 men sufficient. Jean Lacouture and Philippe Devillers, La fin d'une guerre: Indochine 1954 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1960), p. 25.

30. Declaration of Paul Coste-Floret, Minister of War, in May 1947, after his return from a mission in Vietnam. Quoted in (Gen.) Jean Marchand, Le Drame Indochinois (Paris: J. Peyronnet et Cie., 1953), p. 95.

31. Bernard B. Fall, Street Without Joy: Indochina at War, 1946-1954 (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole, 1961), p. 27.

32. Edgar O'Ballance, The Indochina War, 1945-1954 (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 93.

33. Ibid., p. 115.

34. Fall, Street Without Joy, p. 28. He calls it one of France's greatest colonial defeats.

35. Marchand, op. cit., pp. 136-137.

36. Dinfreville, op. cit., p. 136.

37. A Viet Minh combatant in this battle vividly described his comrades' terror at their first sight of napalm, "the fire which falls from the sky." They thought it was the atomic bomb. Ngo Van Chien, Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1955), pp. 154-155.

38. Marchand, op. cit., p. 147.
39. Navarre, op. cit., pp. 46-47.
40. Joseph Laniel, Le Drame Indochinois (Paris: Plon, 1957), pp. 55-63.



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A general survey from antiquity to the contemporary period which stresses the economic factor in history sympathetic to the DRV. The author is regarded as friendly to the Communist cause in Vietnam.

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Dinfreville, Jacques (pseud.). L'Operation Indochine. Paris: Editions Inter-Nationales, 1953.

A French officer writes with knowledge of the military situation prior to the Geneva Conference, the forces involved, tactics, and logistics.

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Hammer, Ellen J. The Struggle for Indochina. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954.

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A Franco-Vietnamese officer, given command of a Catholic militia in Cochinchina, pacifies a province and wins over its people.

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A French deputy's mission of inquiry to Vietnam, made in 1953, with an appendix of documents.

Mus, Paul. Sociologie d'une Guerre. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952.

An analysis of the sociological and cultural bases for the Franco-Vietnamese conflict, in a book difficult to read but important to understand.

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A detailed account of the last year of war in Indochina by the military commander in chief who planned and executed the battle of Dien Bien Phu. General Navarre lays the blame for France's defeat in Indochina squarely in the lap of the politicians, and he makes a good case.

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personalities, famous and unknown, involved in it. Roy has a gift for firing the imagination and, as a French air force officer who spent time in Indochina, he knows what he is talking about.

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A readable and expert analysis of the political, economic, and military aspects of the guerrilla conflict in Vietnam, and the role of ideological concepts in shaping the military strategy of the Viet Minh.

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Vo Nguyen Giap. People's War, People's Army. New York: Praeger, 1962.

Originally a series of articles written by the Viet Minh commander in chief detailing his concepts of fighting a political war, this edition also contains a profile of Giap by Bernard B. Fall and an introduction by Roger Hilsman.

Werth, Alexander. France: 1940-1955. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1956.

A history of contemporary France which includes much stimulating material on the impact of the Indochina issue on French politics and vice versa.

The Republic of Vietnam and Communist Insurgency,

1954-1965

by

William A. Nighswonger

A BACKGROUND SKETCH

The progressive complication of political and military developments in the war in Vietnam makes it hazardous to attempt more than a tentative description of an ongoing war and even more hazardous to arrive at conclusions for this study. The principal effort in this paper has been to survey briefly the major programs and policies relevant to the general theme of isolating the guerrilla in the context of their political, military, and administrative milieu. Despite the recent massive American participation in the war, it is necessary to examine most of these programs as Vietnamese-administered, with Americans in advisory and support roles.

The Communist insurgency against the Government of Vietnam (henceforth, GVN) could not be meaningfully studied apart from the preceding Viet Minh-French ordeal of 1945-1954. The Communists' activity after Geneva was only a continuation of their efforts for victory against different opponents in a more limited arena of conflict: the southern zone. Although many observers believed that the Geneva Conference, with the subsequent bifurcation of Vietnam, would merely delay Communist control over all Vietnam, the partition almost immediately induced significant changes in the course of the war and in the life of the Vietnamese people in the north and south.

PARTITION

The division into the two zones was effected at the 17th parallel in Central Vietnam. South Vietnam starts at Quang Tri Province (insulated from the north by a narrow "demilitarized zone") and reaches west to the borders of lower Laos and Cambodia.

The main areas of South Vietnam are (1) the narrow coastal strip between the China Sea and the Annamite mountain chain; (2) the High Plateau reaching west of the Truong-Son mountains toward Laos and Cambodia, where approximately 500,000 tribal peoples live; (3) the predominantly jungle area north and east of Saigon, where rubber plantations are located; and (4) the rich Mekong delta below Saigon, which runs to the tip of the Camau Peninsula.

The rugged mountain and jungle terrain in the north and the mangrove swamps in the south combine with the uncontrolled Lao-Cambodian border areas to produce ideal guerrilla terrain. An abundance of food within the south is also a vital advantage.

A smaller stage, favorable for the new period of Communist insurgency, was set within the new borders. Laos, once part of a single arena for the French, had now become a separate problem. North Vietnam was--by the Geneva Agreement--safe from retaliation, while it served as a national base for support and control of future insurgency in the south.

A major economic adjustment was necessary by both zones after partition. The north had almost all the industrial resources of Indochina. With a highly concentrated population and an inadequate food supply, the economic interaction of Tonkin with the rice-surplus producing Mekong delta of the south had been a mutually beneficial reciprocity.

There were important social and political consequences of the partition. The movement southward of 900,000 refugees, mostly Catholic, presented enormous resettlement problems for the Diem regime and fostered new--and old--Catholic-Buddhist resentments. The newly arrived refugees needed and received assistance not proffered the average--usually non-Catholic--citizen. Choice land, for example, which sometimes had been denied citizens in the south, was provided the refugees. And the traditional northern feelings of cultural superiority and of inherent right to lead the nation created friction in government circles.

In the north, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam--first proclaimed in the aftermath of the Japanese surrender--now at last had a secure national territorial base, immune from French claims. Also in the north, Ho Chi Minh solidified the internal political system by destroying and "re-educating" non-Communist political elements. Even nationalists invited back by Ho from Paris were liquidated. The Dai Viets and the Quoc Dan Dang, both staunch nationalist parties, suffered the loss of main elements which were in the north and central areas. Ho, a Communist since 1920, wanted only Communist-controlled nationalism in his zone, with a



convenient façade of non-Communist parties empty of real power as his "loyal opposition."

The State of Vietnam, with the Emperor Bao Dai as chief of state, began its administration of the south under Premier Ngo Dinh Diem. For Diem there was almost no political organization or support. The only power centers were the quasi-political sects of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao and the Binh Xuyen gangster rulers of the Saigon area.

#### THE NATURE OF THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT

The Viet Cong (meaning "Vietnamese Communist") activity in the south--following a period of quiescence, 1955-1956, after Geneva--has operated as a continuation of the earlier Viet Minh campaign to gain control of Vietnam. Cadres that had gone underground or travelled to North Vietnam for further training resurfaced in home areas in the south to continue the conflict.

The Indochinese Communist Party had formed the Viet Minh as a united front of nationalist groups against the Japanese and, later, the French. Its wide nationalist, anticolonialist, appeal brought the Viet Minh and its founder, Ho Chi Minh, an enduring place in the political symbolism of the Vietnamese people. Such political parties as the Dai Viet, however, participated for a time in the Viet Minh, but were decidedly non-Communist.

The structure for Communist take-over in the south was fully prepared for the expected demise of Diem or the elections leading to unification. When neither of these events happened, the guerrilla war was renewed.

In essence, the struggle that has followed has been a competition for the support and control of the people. The Viet Minh heritage of the Viet Cong was exemplified in the thousands of political and military cadres from all over South Vietnam, their concrete experience in the governing of large areas, and the generally favorable and familiar image of Ho Chi Minh and his followers as great nationalist leaders. The only lack of the Viet Cong in the south was legitimacy. And legitimacy, plus the American-supplied power to claim it, was about all that Diem's government had (and even that legitimacy has been debated).

### Political Structure

In order to secure broad nationalist support, and to dissociate the southern campaign from its source of control in the north, the National Front for the Liberation of the South was announced by Hanoi as having been formed in December 1960. Its aims conform closely to the Lao Dong (Workers) Party, the Communist organ in the north. Its few non-Communist elements, included for window dressing, do not change the fact of its role as the agent of the Communist Party.<sup>1</sup> Other names had been used by insurgents in the south since 1954 to cover their political activities, but this was the first public organization to have the overt blessing of Hanoi.

The Lao Dong party rules the Liberation Front through its Committee for the Supervision of the South. There are two party zones: the Interzone 5 of Central Vietnam and the Highlands, and Nam Bo, covering the south and southwest provinces (including the Mekong delta). Each zone has committees for its special activities (training, espionage, etc.). Within each interzone there are four interprovince administrative areas, covering from three to nine provinces. Below these levels, the Viet Cong follows the organization of the Republic of Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> There are province, district, and village committees--often with a full retinue of staff, particularly where Communist control is complete. In such places, the Communists may be operating a full-scale local government providing education, medical care, taxes, justice, and the other activities that once may have been conducted by the South Vietnamese government. In other villages, where government control is stronger, the Viet Cong may have only a cell or an agent.

### Military Structure

The North Vietnamese army high command is represented on the Lao Dong party's Committee for the South, but the military role is subject to political controls typical of Communist states. There is a general in command of military affairs for each interzone. There are three levels of indigenous fighting units. The hard-core VC soldier of the regular forces is full-time, on salary, and moves wherever he is needed--which could be anywhere in Vietnam. Some of these soldiers were trained in North Vietnam.

Irregular forces, usually fighting on a part-time basis, while doing other work to live, are organized at the district level, but may range anywhere in a province for special operations. At the base of the military organization is the local

village guerrilla, who may be poorly armed with spears, machetes, and knives.

As the war has escalated, North Vietnamese army units have been identified in South Vietnam. Their presence (apparently in division strength) represents a completely new tier of forces on the Viet Cong side.

Although the various types of forces may carry out operations suitable to their strength, a major operation may draw in irregulars alongside regular troops.

### Training

Most officers, political cadres, and some guerrilla fighters were trained for many months in the north. Many served in the army of North Vietnam. Others have been taken to training bases in southern Laos. There are major training areas used inside Vietnam. The full-time regional or province level forces get about two-thirds military and one-third political training. District forces split their training about 50-50, and village units are more heavily politically trained 70-30 over military training.

Political cadres are always with regular troops, and cell activity keeps each soldier close to the party line perspective. Captured letters and diaries indicate the personal depth to which motivation training is carried. Self-criticism and cell group criticism of individuals are widely used. The extremely rigorous demands made on the full-time guerrilla are carefully prepared for by psychological preparation leading to the reorientation of the value system of the individual fighter to coincide with party values. This psycho-political preparation is the key to much of the success in human engineering practiced by the Viet Cong. Non-Communists who overlook the rigorous, quasi-religious, total character of Communist indoctrination have difficulty understanding Communist behavior.

### Logistics

Viet Minh arms were carefully stored at hundreds of locations in the south after the Geneva agreements. This was the beginning of what has become a substantial collection of firepower.

Before 1962, many VC village guerrillas fought with primitive, locally made guns, many of the latter coming from scores of weapons "factories" in the south.

Substantial quantities of weapons have been taken from South Vietnamese regional and local forces. Many other weapons captured from the French or given by the Russians or Chinese (which may have earlier been captured in Korea or from the Chinese Nationalists), have been moved in by boat, either by sea, or by the Mekong, or by the many trails through Laos and the Highlands.

The Viet Cong have recently begun to develop uniform weapons systems based on modern Chinese designs requiring special ammunition. Resupply of such ammunition makes regular external support essential.

Main VC bases are always located in remote areas involving the most difficult terrain. The notorious "Zone D" about 20 miles north of Saigon--in the jungle and plantation area--is a major stronghold. The mountainous area overlooking the coastal plain of Central Vietnam is a standard location for bases. And the mangrove swamps in remote parts of the Mekong delta are also favorite bases.

Food supplies are usually secured from local sources. Taxes are often collected in VC-controlled areas, payable in rice, a portion of which may be shipped to bases by a large and involved system of bearers. Large numbers of men and women, usually unqualified for positions as fighters and propagandists, are enticed or kidnapped to serve in the logistical system.

In remote mountain areas--where there is no population to tax--regular force elements supervise farming of rice carried out by tribal peoples under their control, or by lowlanders brought into the locale for that purpose.

Bases in lower Laos are a part of the well-known Ho Chi Minh trail. Housing and food stations are along the way. Elephants have been used in some parts of the trail to move supplies.

### POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

Vietnamese Communists--and all Vietnamese nationalists--have the ultimate objective of uniting Vietnam under one government. In the case of the south, it is generally understood that the Communists would allow a coalition government, resembling the National

Liberation Front, to exist apart for a time, but their goal is clearly the unity of Vietnam within communism. Larger objectives of North Vietnam appear to include at least a hegemonic role in relation to the Pathet Lao.

More immediate objectives of the insurgency in the south can be subsumed under a single concept: the popular isolation and/or destruction of the government of South Vietnam and the substitution of the Liberation Front, if necessary on a gradual official-by-official, hamlet-by-hamlet basis.

There has been a continuing campaign to identify the Diem government and its successors with the United States, and therefore as a tool of American imperialism. "My-Diem" (Americans-Diem) is a hyphenated word that was used incessantly to establish this notion. The corollary objective has been to obtain the removal of the Americans.

#### MILITARY OBJECTIVES

VC forces are being used to isolate government officials, services, and protective forces from the populace. The VC orientation is toward control of people vs. control of territory. As in the case of Dien Bien Phu, and several lesser victories in the south, the Viet Cong appears to choose objectives that have an unusually symbolic character, presumably with the intention of deriving political benefits. Apparently the VC thought the Americans might leave if the situation looked hopeless enough.

#### GEOGRAPHIC OBJECTIVES

The previously stated, overall objective of unity of the nation is, of course, geographic. Occasionally there has been talk of an effort by the Liberation Front to establish a provisional government in a liberated area, holding territory as identifiably occupied.

#### MILITARY TECHNIQUES

Obeing Communist guerrilla doctrine, the VC have avoided military actions where success was uncertain. Their selection of symbolic targets has been tactical as well as strategic.

Prior to a big propaganda push in an area, a local outpost might be levelled. In Quang Nam Province in 1964, for example, a thrust into hamlets below the Da Nang air base was heralded by destruction of headquarters in one of the most secure hamlets directly on Route 1. It was a symbolic gesture indicating capability. Current attacks on US installations indicate this type of political-propaganda intent in contrast to traditional military success.

Harassment and interdiction of transportation routes are widely and effectively practiced. Many outposts in Vietnam have long been supplied by air after the roads were cut by Viet Cong action. The disparity of VC and GVN power has driven the Communists to using their wits. Decoys of damaged helicopters, for instance, have brought rescuers to the scene only to encounter withering fire. And carefully spaced poles erected in open areas have hampered helicopter assaults.

### POLITICAL WARFARE

The general objective of isolating the government from the people, which is the destruction of control and the substitution of a Communist government, may involve delicate interweaving of military and politico-psychological techniques.

The first principle of the Communist approach is to identify with and understand the peasant. Propaganda content starts with his concerns: local issues. The Communist cadre who drives out the landlords and distributes his land to the peasants may well be getting at the "gut" of the issues of the particular village. One village is said to have been delighted when a required detour in a busy public pathway was straightened by overruling the will of the wealthy landowner who lost land by the new route.

Many local "liberation fronts" have been organized and oriented toward issues that are meaningful to a particular province or region.

Appeals may have little or nothing to do with Communist theory. Nationalist feelings are sometimes aroused by endless drumfire against the United States as interventionists and imperialists.

Traditional forms of communication are used. Drama teams and singing groups--often using the classic Vietnamese instruments and songs--purvey propaganda and pleasure in the same package.



The peasant and his entire family is involved as quickly and completely as possible in the Viet Cong mission or message. Cadres move into a village and organize interest groups for young men, young women, mothers, etc. Each person is given something to do. When a combat hamlet is constructed (similar to the government-sponsored strategic hamlet) each person, young or old, has a civil defense responsibility. Cadres returning from the north rely on their friends and relatives to reach into the community. And strong family ties are highly effective instruments of involvement in Vietnam.

Communists have different approaches to different areas, depending on their degree of control. In a government-controlled village, quiet and caution may be required. In a contested area, persuasion might be alternated with terror.

Revelations of corruption in government and exploitation of local grievances against the GVN is a favorite VC tactic. Demonstrations of force or terror illustrate to the wavering villager in a contested area that he cannot expect protection or justice from the government. In many hamlets, just before and after the death of Diem, VC cadres persuaded the squads of militiamen to turn their weapons back to the government and to resign from the militia.

After the influence and power of the government is weakened, active proselytizing begins. Special organizations to work on soldiers, youth, and government officials spring into existence.

Sometimes the involvement of peasants is blunt and sudden. Viet Cong agitprop (agitation-propaganda) teams have been known to throw rows of women and children between them and government forces to discourage government fire. Air attacks and artillery have been drawn to a village, where there are VC, putting the people in the middle. Although this use of hostages has hurt the Viet Cong, it has been used to good effect many times. Opportunities to exploit government mistakes in air and artillery attacks are rarely missed by the VC.

#### TERRORISM

The Viet Cong strategy of terror appears to encompass multiple objectives. The use of terror is closely related to the central objective of isolating the government from the people, first by cutting the capability of the government to function, and second, by discouraging the populace from participating in or assisting government efforts.

Perhaps the most serious destruction wrought by the VC has been the systematic assassination and kidnapping of district, village, and hamlet officials, health workers, and school teachers. The direct deprivation of thousands of key local leaders has hampered effective administration of government programs. Moreover, the high risk of these positions has certainly discouraged many potentially good men from accepting them. In some cases, the VC have entered into "gentleman's agreements" not to disturb government functions if the self-defense forces and village chiefs do not interrupt their activities.

Government programs have been hindered by terror applied to the citizenry. Peasants have been threatened for taking government loans, cautioned against moving into strategic hamlets, and threatened for buying land in the GVN reform program.

The Communists have also used terror and assassination against corrupt officials, to the delight of the peasants. But more often, the best district chiefs and school teachers are earmarked for death, as they personify good government and are a threat to the success of the Communists.

Attacks on American installations are probably not intended only to discourage American involvement (although the removal of American dependents was finally effected by the Viet Cong in 1964). Such attacks call attention to Americans as interventionists who do not belong in Vietnam.

As their fortunes have risen, the Viet Cong have employed terror freely. Once they have the military power, and the peasant elites have been trained, terror generally whips the remainder of the population into cooperation, although it can backfire. In Binh Dinh Province in 1965, for example, a Buddhist monastery was attacked and ten monks were killed; popular response against the action was vigorous.

#### REGIONALISMS AND RELIGIOUS TENSION

Although it is difficult to measure, VC agents have manipulated government and religious groups and issues wherever possible. Regional differences among northern, southern, and central groups have been exacerbated by the Viet Cong.

### ECONOMIC WARFARE

VC control over much of the delta rice lands and the roads and canals connecting them to Saigon have caused serious supply and inflation problems. Charcoal in some areas is taxed as much as 50%.

### DEMOGRAPHIC WARFARE

A comparatively recent tactic of the Viet Cong may be tentatively identified in the massive exodus of hundreds of thousands of civilians from combat areas. The refugee flow by September 1965 had passed the 400,000 mark. Some observers have suggested that the Viet Cong is deliberately burdening the GVN with the task of caring for refugees. Also, the flow provides an easy channel for infiltration. It should be noted that the stepped up pace of the war--involving increased air and artillery action --and the increased use of Viet Cong terror also accounts for the influx.

### LOCAL SUPPORT FOR THE GUERRILLAS

At the heart of the Viet Cong strength has been the Vietnamese peasantry, which comprises about 85% of the population of South Vietnam. Considerable numbers of the middle-class officials, army officers, and intellectuals went with the North Vietnamese regime, but the VC program is peasant-oriented, if not peasant-guided. The young villagers, needed by the Viet Cong as fighters, have been taken by enlistment and by force. The family ties of these young men have often induced neutralism, if not direct support, with respect to the Communist program.

Some tribal peoples of the highland areas have long been susceptible to Viet Cong efforts at enlistment. Viet Cong cadres, meticulously trained in the various tribal customs, have continued to work with many of the groups, often intermarrying, learning the language, and accepting the customs. Many tribesmen went north after Geneva and have returned to their home areas after careful training.

A remarkable example of the control held over some tribal groups can be found in Quang Nam, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien Provinces in Central Vietnam. In Quang Nam, the entire xenophobic Katu tribe was moved from its traditional areas deep into

the jungles, where they evidently assisted the VC by raising rice, serving as bearers and guides, and fighting. Other adjoining areas have been "cleared" of tribal peoples in massive jungle resettlement projects in the interest of the Viet Cong. An entire village previously resettled by the GVN was kidnapped within 24 hours in 1964.

Merchants, plantation operators, and owners of small industries assist the VC under duress. The substantial Chinese business community depends in part on the free flow of commerce, particularly rice, in areas of Viet Cong control.

### The Nature of Local Support

In listing the kinds of support given the Viet Cong, it is well to keep in mind that a great deal of the support provided is supplied under duress, and that "support" does not necessarily mean whole-hearted endorsement of the Communist cause.

Millions of peasants, caught between rising Communist pressure for cooperation and only sporadic government protection, have opted to assist the Communists. Long-time observers--Vietnamese and American--believe most peasants would opt for even a moderately effective non-Communist government if they had the protection that permitted a real choice. For most villages at present there is no viable alternative to some of the following measures of cooperation with the Viet Cong: (1) manpower--peasants and tribal peoples supply soldiers, watchmen, guides, bearers, informers, arms manufacturers, officials, political cadres, medical personnel, drama and entertainment groups; (2) commodities and materials--they also supply homemade weapons, booby traps, spike boards, food, cement, and other building materials; (3) money--the general population pays taxes, protection money, and road taxes at VC checkpoints; and (4) intelligence--perhaps most important, peasants, officials, and merchants give information about GVN troop activity plans and about who is telling the GVN about the Communists. Despite involved GVN efforts, VC intelligence on GVN military operations is almost always available in time to avoid encounter.

The ability of the Viet Cong to obtain food, intelligence, and recruits within South Vietnam demonstrates how very important indigenous support has been to the Communist cause. Unquestionably the present intensity and extensiveness of the insurgent effort could not exist without substantial local support.

## OUTSIDE SUPPORT

The most significant external supporting nation has been the very source of the insurgency: North Vietnam. Here are the trainers, managers, and major financiers of the movement, as well as the collectors and distributors of material assistance from other nations. Radio broadcasts in behalf of the Viet Cong emanate endlessly from the north. North Vietnam has also begun to commit its large regular army resources to duty in South Vietnam.

China has stood close to North Vietnam--probably uncomfortably close for Ho Chi Minh and others. Chinese assistance in the war with the French was important in terms of advice, training, and war materials. As the prime author and exporter of peasant revolutionary technique, China has had a great influence on Vietnam--over and above her traditional hegemonic influence. China's apparently limited offer of troop support through "volunteers" to drive out the Americans underscores the potential manpower resources that could stand behind the Viet Cong effort. The reluctance of North Vietnam to invite such participation is rooted in the memory of 1,000 years of Chinese imperial domination of the Vietnamese people.

Russian assistance in economic and military aid to North Vietnam has been substantial. Small arms from Russia are being widely used in the south, while antiaircraft missiles to counter US air attacks have been employed in the north. The world-wide diplomatic and propaganda mechanisms of Russia have assisted the Vietnamese Communists. A Russian trawler was spotted off Guam in position to relay early warnings of B-2 departures for raids on VC remote bases. The Russian ambassadors to North Vietnam and Cambodia are insurgency experts. Russian technicians and advisers in North Vietnam in the spring of 1965 are reported to have numbered 3,000--an increase of 2,000 from the previous month.<sup>3</sup>

Historically sensitive to the incursions of Vietnamese power, Cambodia has chosen to be selective in her resentment, opposing any crossing of her eastern borders by GVN forces, but harboring Viet Cong troops who use the areas as sanctuaries for withdrawal.

The southern "panhandle" of Laos is presently beyond the control of the Laotian government and mostly in the hands of the VC. Bases and staging areas, as well as parts of the Ho Chi Minh trail, are known to exist in this area. Most of the traffic from the north enters the south well below the 17th parallel--partly to avoid the appearance of invasion from the north.

Eastern Europe also has lent support. Czechoslovakia and Hungary, for example, have sent arms and medical supplies to the Viet Cong. And the Poles have been fully partisan on the ICC team--never voting to the detriment of North Vietnam.

#### The Relation of Outside Support to Events

The intimate and total involvement of the North Vietnamese obviously accounts for much of the Viet Cong success in the conflict up to now. The combined experience and skill of the North Vietnamese, gained from the long struggle with the French, has been buttressed by the even longer experience and classic successes of the Chinese and the Russian Communists. The vigor and breadth of support enjoyed by the Viet Cong can be traced to its Viet Minh heritage which blanketed all Indochina before Geneva. Thus, "external support" is of the greatest significance in understanding the sources of Viet Cong strength and growth.

The reserve strength of manpower from external sources is a matter of critical importance in studying the war as it develops. The 350,000-man army of North Vietnam may be increasingly committed in the south, via the usual routes of infiltration.

#### THE COUNTERINSURGENT RESPONSE

When Ngo Dinh Diem was named premier of the State of Vietnam by Bao Dai on July 7, 1954, few observers gave his regime long to live. He was, many thought, taking the reins of a temporary regime presumably awaiting submersion into a united Vietnamese Communist state by the act of national elections. There was even doubt that his shaky child of Geneva could survive that long.

Diem's key task was to create a government from the splintered hodgepodge of politics inherited from the French and unclaimed by the Communists. His multiple foes appeared to hold the cards of power. The politically and militarily potent religious sects--the Hoa Hao and Cao Dais--threatened the order of the state and the life of his government. Saigon's security and its business were at the mercy of the Binh Xuyen gangster elements, covetous of their control of the police and their profitable rackets.

The first task, then, was not to defeat the temporarily quiescent Communists, but to build a nation where, indeed, only



a temporary building permit (the Geneva Agreement) existed at the moment. The success of the government in winning or destroying the power of the sects and the Binh Xuyen was closely followed by the remarkable preliminary "foot election," in which 900,000 North Vietnamese "voted with their feet" and elected to go to the south. Resettling these refugees in itself claimed enormous energies and resources from the Diem regime and the United States.

In these early years Diem was advised to get out among the people and establish himself and his government in the countryside. Virtually unknown himself, in the rural areas, Diem's obvious rival was the very real image of Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh as the legitimate parents of the new Vietnamese nation. Diem's task was to establish, in the minds of his constituency, the reality and worthiness of himself and his government. The legal legitimacy awarded his government at Geneva was only a "hunting license" to find the support essential for his political survival. Diem made many visits to rural areas in the early years and managed to establish his image in much of South Vietnam. (The Communists later helped him build his name, but the image they painted was somewhat different.)

The Vietnamese government set about the economic and social development with gusto. Elaborate plans for national development were laid. Heavy emphasis was placed on roads as a security requirement--anticipating the need to move troops and supplies quickly. Village schools were trebled in number within a few years.

By 1956, Diem had begun to talk about a national "formula," which was to be the heart of his nation-building enterprise: personalism. A social and political philosophy, personalism is derived from French Catholic thinkers and stresses the dignity and the worth of the individual and the role of the state in maximizing his potential. The paternalistic role of the state has been compared with the Confucian spirit of mandarinism.<sup>4</sup> Diem tried to utilize personalism as the ideological source of the social and political programs the government brought into being. However, on significant issues the personalistic preaching was sometimes remote from the actual government practices.

In the absence of political organization, Diem, with his brother and alter ego, Ngo Dinh Nhu, created it. They organized the quasi-secret Can Lao Party as the watchdog over administrators and the protector and extender of personalism in government. A mass political party, the National Revolutionary Movement was organized everywhere.

The Republican Youth was organized later for young men, or anyone old enough to bear arms. Ngo Dinh Nhu's wife, Madame Nhu, personally led the Woman's Solidarity Movement. There were also farmer's associations. And there was an organization for everyone which included a nation-building concept.

In his mass organizations and parties, Diem had copied the Communists. He was trying to weld the rural people--whose whole world had been their own village--into a nationally aware populace eager to support the revolution Diem talked about so much. Unfortunately, Diem copied the Communists in other ways. After destroying the military opposition of the sects, he imprisoned thousands of minority political elements just as the Communists had done in North Vietnam. By 1963, South Vietnam had most of the marks of a police state in its political life.

In sum, Diem inaugurated vigorous nation-building efforts necessary for the survival of any state. The first two years of his effort could be called "preventive counterinsurgency," the awakening of national awareness and solidarity, and the consolidation of power. His respite from overt Communist guerrilla activity, presumably based on the anticipation of their victory by election, was soon ended. After Diem refused to conduct the elections (an issue beyond the scope of this paper), the systematic Communist strategy of isolation and annihilation of his new government began.

#### DEFENSE POLICY

The earliest planning for the defense of South Vietnam apparently included a reduction of about 50% in the regular army and an emphasis on maintenance of internal order and dealing with Communist guerrillas. External aggression would be met by the Manila pact nations.<sup>5</sup>

At first, under the overall command of French General Paul Ely, 300 Americans were to train the Vietnamese army, with Lt.Gen. John W. O'Daniel, noted for his success in training the Korean army, the senior American officer in charge. O'Daniel is quoted as saying:

The army will be, above all, according to American ideas on the subject, a police force capable of spotting communist guerrillas and communist efforts at infiltration.<sup>6</sup>

The results of the first few years of this training did not bear out the prediction. The army of South Vietnam was reorganized from the rather loosely knit battalion units of the French period into regiments, divisions, and corps. The units were taught to operate in these larger groupings and it became increasingly difficult in later years for American advisers to get small unit operations at all.

Highly mechanized, the new Vietnamese army tended to keep to the roads on operations. Although the political role of the army among the people had been mentioned at the beginning of the training, the emphasis did not materialize in operations. By 1959, the regular forces were being readied for defending the nation in a conventional war.

From the point of view of senior US military advisers in Vietnam in early 1959, the Communist military threat as an internal problem had largely disappeared. It was, in fact, later in that very year that the gradually mounting assassinations and kidnapping incidents began to be paralleled by widespread larger military operations. By 1961, the army was permitted to go beyond its 150,000 ceiling to more than 200,000 in response to the emergency.

#### The Civil Guard (Bao An)

The Diem government inherited another layer of armed forces known as the Civil Guard. Ill-trained and ill-equipped, it was known as the dumping ground for undesirable officers from the regular army. According to its American civilian advisers, the Michigan State University Group (a contract group with the United States Operations Mission), the Civil Guard was to become essentially police in function. Its 70,000 members were to be lightly armed and to serve in small units as rural police.

Vietnamese officials and American military advisers disagreed with the MSU group, recommending organization and heavier arms like standard military units. The impasse which occurred resulted in little action to improve the Civil Guard and in the eventual US decision to accept the Vietnamese position. The MSU group refused to continue as advisers, and--after a period with USOM as advisers--US army personnel took over training and equipping the guard along the usual fashion of infantry units.<sup>7</sup> The escalation of the Civil Guard to military status contributed to a continuing vacuum in professional rural police that persisted until 1965.

### Self-Defense Corps (Dan Va)

The lowest level of armed forces, the village militias, had been in existence on a voluntary basis since early in the Diem regime. In 1961, 80,000 of these fighters were put on full pay and began to receive improved training and US assistance in arms and supplies. The SDC and Civil Guard have borne the brunt of Viet Cong action by patrolling and defending their own villages. Less well equipped or prepared, but closer to the village people, the SDC have been choice targets for the VC. In 1964, the SDC was renamed "Popular Forces."

### The US Advisory Role

As the emergency deepened, US advisory components were increased, who tried to instigate more aggressive action from the Vietnamese units. Advisers were placed, after earlier refusals by Diem, at lower levels--down to battalions. More night operations were encouraged. Ranger training--stressing small-unit, close-in fighting--was developed for the first time.

The mission in 1961, headed by General Maxwell Taylor, led to the introduction of helicopters, increased air support, and patrol junks to cut seaborne VC supply lines.

Difficulties in getting the Vietnamese army to operate with aggressive effectiveness were centered partly on the intricate system Diem used to keep his officers from gaining too much power. Most of the highest ranking generals were in special positions not involving direct command of troops. Furthermore, Vietnamese officers were excessively cautious in battle. A constantly repeated complaint was voiced in American advisory circles over the failure to move quickly to close the gap when guerrillas had been surrounded. Search and clear operations consistently produced insignificant results.

By 1962, the American Military Advisory Assistance Group was subsumed (later merged) under the Military Assistance Command, headed by General Paul Harkins, and American air support had been increased by US-supplied, fixed-wing aircraft and helicopter squadrons.

## RURAL PACIFICATION

As the Viet Cong demonstrated its expanding presence in the countryside, it was apparent that more effective means for control and protection of the population were necessary in order to isolate the guerrillas and capture or destroy them. The Taylor mission had recommended broad democratic forms to make the regime more popular with the people. However, the pressures of the emergency led to a decision to delay pressuring Diem for the reforms until later. Careful study was given to the problem in the Staley report made late 1961. As a result, announcement was soon made of massive efforts in economic and social development, village radio communications, public works programs, and special attention to Highlanders' problems.

The successful Malayan experience was being studied by GVN and US officials. R.K.G. Thompson, a key British official in the Defense Ministry of Malaya, headed a team in residence at Saigon to study the Vietnam problem in the light of his nation's earlier experiences. Early in 1962 the results of these studies led the Vietnamese to launch the strategic hamlet program, involving resources and population control, resettlement, fortified, self-defended villages, social and economic improvements, propaganda, etc.

### Land Development

The GVN already had considerable experience in parts of this approach through its Land Development Program. Started in 1957 to resettle some of the northern refugees on untitled land, the program eventually was undertaken in 90 centers. Settlers received land, for which they paid over a long period, and they were assisted in most aspects of resettlement such as building schools and medical stations.

Although the program involved important economic and social aspects, its fundamental purpose was the strengthening of security in remote areas, placing, as Diem put it, "a living wall" before the Communists. In fact, the spreading of the centers into remote areas of the Highlands resulted in exposing the settlers to direct contact with main VC forces and Highland tribes who considered the settlers to be trespassers on their tribal lands, some portions of which had been individually owned by Highlanders. These incidents exacerbated the enduring traditional dislike and suspicion that has characterized Highlander-Vietnamese relations.

Because of excess haste and lack of careful planning for the settlers, the United States dropped out of the joint planning for the program at an early date. Diem's frequent use of former refugees insured the loyalty of these new communities. It was these persons who owed most to the government and liked the Communists least of all. In sum, it might be said that land development was an effort to secure areas by bringing "safe" people to inhabit them.

### Civic Action Directorate

From the first, the principal channel of government communication with village reform was the Civic Action Directorate. Cadres numbering 1,800 were trained to work in a nationwide effort at community development, anti-illiteracy campaigns, and social organization. They were charged with the building of inter-family groups in order to facilitate social reciprocity in times of personal need. The principal objective was to gain tighter control over the population so that Communist-leaning elements would be kept in line by the family leaders. Unfortunately, the civic action cadres were under great pressure to fulfill the goals of their superiors and ended up sometimes carrying out the unpopular job of collecting taxes.

Civic action cadres were ordered to the areas of special need, such as the land development centers. Later they bore the burden of establishing the unpopular agrovilles and, eventually, the strategic hamlets. Because of their inadequate numbers and their concentration on special areas, many hamlets rarely saw their civic action cadre and the benefits he brought. Perhaps the greatest handicap of all was the requirement to hold popular meetings to ballyhoo government programs and organize protests against the Communists. These are hardly the assignments to build confidence and affection in an already harassed populace.

### Agrovilles

The most direct predecessor of the strategic hamlet program was the agroville ("rural town"). The prime security problem in the delta area was the community pattern, with houses spread out and often lining canals for miles, instead of being tightly bunched together as in parts of central Vietnam. Such communities were difficult to control or protect.



The first resettlement effort transplanted two categories of families without economic and social benefits. Families thought to be Viet Cong, or sympathizers, were herded into "Qui Khu" centers. Reliable families were moved into "Qui Ap" centers. The latter was primarily to protect, and the former to control, the occupants. Often the "agglomeration centers," as they were called, were as far as six miles from the farmer's source of living: his paddy fields. The result was that hatred against the GVN developed among once friendly families and intensified among the VC sympathizers.

The plan of the later agrovilles was considerably improved, but still was largely based on the hard work of those being resettled. Too little allowance was made for relocating. Housing for animals was not provided. The well-meaning plans for community-owned orchards and fish ponds were lost on the people who had been forced to contribute many days of labor to prepare the site. Competent cadre, essential to the program, did not appear as planned.

Unfavorable responses from the peasants were easily exploited and amplified by great Viet Cong propaganda efforts which depicted the agrovilles as slave towns and prisons. The program, started in 1959, was abandoned at the end of 1961 in the face of the mounting plans for the strategic hamlet program. The results of the agrovillage effort were almost the reverse of its intended goal. The GVN, with the assistance of the Viet Cong propaganda, had scarred its own image once again. The program had put the GVN exactly where it had intended to place the VC--in isolation from the people.

#### The Strategic Hamlet Program

In March 1962, in great haste the Vietnamese government officially launched the strategic hamlet ("Ap Chien Luoc") program, although unofficially, some hamlets were being built before the end of 1961. While American advisers had been very much involved in the basic idea, Ngo Dinh Nhu had started the program apart from the substantial US assistance that followed later. As noted, the basic notion was to bring protection to the people, by their own efforts, and to destroy the Viet Cong cells and agents in the countryside. The mood of the movement was to be spontaneous enthusiasm of the peasants, springing from the theme of total revolution for the hamlet. The concept fitted the philosophy of personalism perfectly.

The plan was for all hamlets (some 12,000) to be fortified and all people to be enlisted, registered, cleansed of VC stigma, or appropriately quarantined politically. Victory would come by giving the peasants the means to defend themselves and the motive to do so through improved government services to the hamlet and free local elections. Denied contact with the peasants, the Viet Cong would starve, surrender, or be hunted down after being isolated from their source of sustenance: the people. They would be "fish out of water."

By the fall of 1962, the American military and civilian advisory groups had begun preparations to adapt their efforts to fit the grand strategy put into action the previous March by Counselor Nhu. A new system of advisers at the province level--the focal point of the hamlet program's administration--was devised by MAAG and USOM. Money and materials were being programmed; pilot efforts were undertaken. USOM was to be the US sponsor of the civilian-oriented programs and eventually sent a representative to each of the provinces.

In 1962, MAAG placed sector advisers in each of the 42 provinces. Each sector adviser had a small US staff to supervise Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps performance, as well as the strategic hamlet campaign. MAAG strength had reached about 13,000 by this time, and US advisers were everywhere in the field at the battalion level among regular forces.

#### Strategic Hamlet Organization

As a committee of three, the Province Chief (who was nearly always both military and civilian commander in the province), the USOM representative, and the MAAG Sector Adviser jointly considered the plans and schedules normally presented by the province staff. American control extended only to the release of US-provided funds or materials. Hamlet construction cadres, young men of little education, were trained and sent out in six-man teams to guide the construction of the hamlets. (In the earlier period this was done by civil servants taken from other duties.) District chiefs, under the command of the province chief, directed the cadres.

#### Hamlet Defenses

A stockade was constructed around the hamlet. At first the donated bamboo of villagers was used, but US MAP (Military Assistance Program) supplies eased this heavy financial burden for the citizen by providing barbed wire and steel pickets produced in America. A steep moat was dug, with a fence on either side and

bamboo or steel spikes located in between. Theoretically, the fence would at least deter infiltration of VC agents and sympathizers, and even of small assault units if covered with a field of fire by the volunteer militia. Each hamlet was permitted one or two squads of "combat youth" volunteers, who received 14 days of mostly military training. The training was financed by USOM funds and reviewed technically by MAAG advisers.

MAP provided such items as carbines, shotguns, pistols, flares, flashlights, and field telephones for the militia in the hamlet. Militiamen were expected to remain in their hamlet, or flee if an overwhelming VC force struck. Later, in 1964, militiamen were made part of the Self-Defense Corps, or Popular Forces, and placed on salary.

Unfortunately, political training was weak. Weapons skill was often quickly lost because many militiamen had no weapon to use in the hamlet. GVN officials were reluctant to place arms in the remote or vulnerable villages where they were most needed.

#### Resettlement

The farmer living outside the walls of the strategic hamlet was assisted in relocating within. The government was to pay the cost of materials needed in moving his house. At times, materials were purchased and distributed as needed to the relocated peasant. Delays in payment irritated him. And moving of families by forced relocation--as had been done in the agrovilles--created hardship and resentment. After 1963 forced relocations were prohibited. There was no apparent attempt to segregate Viet Cong families. The budget of 20 relocated families average per hamlet was sometimes far exceeded.

#### Failure of the Strategic Hamlet Program

The principal deficiency in implementing the program was the failure to isolate and eradicate Viet Cong cells in the hamlets. The number of trained intelligence personnel and police was inadequate for this task. In many hamlets the quiescent Viet Cong cell simply waited its chance to return to action. The failure of population control measures, inadequate arms, and the inability to assure security of the villagers prevented any possibility of success. On top of this was a tendency toward careless and inflated reporting of results. In the pressure to record statistical victory,

more and more hamlets made the "completed" list in name only. The writer vividly recalls revising plans to allocate fertilizer to two "completed" strategic hamlets in Quang Tin Province after authorities declared they could not be safely entered with less than a company of armed men.

Police efforts in association with the hamlet campaign were not planned for except in the later Hop Tac defense plan around Saigon (see below). But the police role of population and resources control was vital to the success of the campaign. Identity cards for individuals had been previously developed nationwide. Family census-picture registration began in strength in 1964. Each family in the more difficult areas would be photographed, cataloged, and presented with the picture of the whole family on prominent display in the home. Truants who played the VC game could easily be spotted by a "nose count" against the photograph. The difficult job of isolating the Viet Cong from the population would be made easier by this technique. As yet it has a long way to go before being significantly useful. Always it requires a total population control program with which it can be associated.

#### Better Leaders

The high toll of GVN village leaders has forced great attention to the training of new officials for a ten-day period in their new duties. Specially trained administrative cadres--of high-level training and high pay--have been sent out to help govern the more heavily infested VC villages undergoing pacification until enough good men rally to the GVN side so that they can rule themselves.

#### Elections

Hamlet elections are required before listing a hamlet as completed. In areas not dominated by the Viet Cong, the elections have occasionally produced some interesting spontaneous results. In the days of Dien, these elections were carefully manipulated by Diemist party leaders. In some provinces, councils of notables to serve as advisers to the province chief have been elected. The possibilities of elections as a counterinsurgency tactic are encouraging only if it is demonstrated that the election is an honest expression of the real public.

#### Self-Help Projects

As grist for the democratic process in the hamlet, self-help project proposals were invited from the various completed hamlets.

Thousands of projects have now been carried out as a result of the expressed will of the people. During the Diem regime, officials deftly shaped the projects to fit what their own national ministry wanted. Having the hamlet as a whole group of voters mull over what they most want is a revolutionary idea. It has been well received where properly tried. Such cooperative projects, involving the choice and the labor of the villagers and the funds and materials of the province (courtesy of USOM), weld government and people into an ad hoc partnership that may take the form of a school house or dispensary.

#### Highlander Resettlement

After some years of Viet Cong success with Highlander peoples, the GVN and USOM outlined a special program to reach their economic and social problems. The GVN has tried to bring scattered Highlanders together for more defensible positions. Economic and educational programs were designed to parallel the resettlement. In Quang Tri Province about 15,000 Bru have resettled in the last seven years. Other areas have been less successful.

#### Economic and Social Programs

The existing technical services in the provinces (agriculture, education, public works, public health, etc.) have increasingly been integrated within the pacification programs. As a witness to the concern and effectiveness of the GVN, planning team projects and services for rural uplift have strongly affected some areas. Schools constructed have numbered in the thousands. Special livestock programs have brought new wealth, often to the poorest of families.

The result of the challenge of the Communist strategy to destroy the government presence in the countryside has been an explosion of hundreds of useful and desired programs reaching toward the peasant. The haunting spectre of rising insecurity has been the chief destroyer of the effectiveness of these programs. Their comparative insignificance in the face of the security problem does not detract from the programs, but only calls to mind that protection of the people is the bedrock of all pacification. The absence of protection reduces the most elaborate of programs to trivia. Protection, constant enough to be trusted, is what cracks the seamless façade covering the inner life of the village, where often everybody really knows who is the VC, but none dares to tell. Protection from the Viet Cong is that atmosphere in

which a man can freely elect to affirm is relation to the government, the single act which epitomizes the isolation of the VC and the strengthening of the nation.

### The New Life Hamlet Program

Since the November revolution (1963) classification of hamlets has been more rigorously controlled to avoid slips, and greater effort to synchronize police and military aspects has been made in order to guarantee protection, although current pacification efforts are far from thorough.

An example of the absolute necessity for properly orchestrated pacification was evident after efforts to pacify a five village area in Quang Nam Province (surrounding Da Nang) in 1964. GVN and American officials at the provincial level had devised a total of 25 programs in police identification, agricultural, educational, and self-help public works programs. Province technical services moved in, side by side with regular army troops, to pacify this strategic area very near the big air base. Suddenly, without warning, the division commander withdrew the supporting troops. Peasants who had begun to trust the GVN's promise of permanent protection, and who had just begun to disclose vital information about the VC network, were quickly dealt with by the VC units who were poised for a quick return to the important base area. A few weeks later the process was begun again, and the troops were again withdrawn. After three such ventures and subsequent retreats, the project was entirely abandoned. The area is now a troublesome hotbed of VC strength for the US Marines guarding the air base. And the example cited, typical of much of the pacification effort in Vietnam, is a simple reminder of the need for synchronization and consistency in the process of pacification. False tries and failures build higher barriers each time between the government and the people.

### HopTac

The campaign to pacify the area around Saigon is an example of a carefully coordinated effort at pacification. It involves the synchronization of military forces, police, and various other civilian agencies in a multi-province plan to limit access of VC to the hamlets and to control food and materials on their way into VC hands. Much of the area has been brought under control sufficiently to begin the family census-picture plan. The steady and



active support of the armed forces has kept large VC units from operating effectively in the area undergoing pacification. Hop-Tac may point the way to more extensive efforts at isolating the guerrilla and establishing an adequate government presence in the countryside. The best proof of success will be visible when it is demonstrated that police and Popular Forces can handle the VC threat on their own, permitting GVN main force elements to move out to more difficult areas.

HopTac demonstrates also the urgent need to pacify using the "oilspot" concept, working from secure areas outward to less secure ones. Many GVN failures in pacification eventuated from choosing heavily concentrated VC areas in order to show dramatic progress. The usual result has been abandonment or perpetual and expensive commitment of troops to protect the areas.

#### Elements in the Failure of the Strategic Hamlet Program

The strategic hamlet concept was rooted in the sound and successful Malayan experience. There were very different conditions in Vietnam, however, and these variations were not adequately allowed for. Nor was the Malayan plan per se faithfully applied.<sup>8</sup>

Protection was the key objective in the hamlet program, the sine qua non on which all psychological, political, and economic programs were necessarily based. In many places construction started in the least secure areas first, without regard for the lack of ability to defend the hamlets against attack from nearby secure bases. Many times the protection of the areas by regular troops during pacification was inadequate or was withdrawn from time to time. The absence of a rural police force was a serious vacuum, since there was no continuing police presence in the hamlets during or after pacification (except in the Saigon environs). The VC infrastructure usually survived in the hamlets, since systematic police intelligence methods did not exist. Hamlet militia were often unarmed, even though trained, because it was feared the VC would capture their weapons.

Intelligence flow, vital to counter guerrilla operations, was directly related to the public confidence in the adequacy and durability of government protection.

Economic and social programs were often effective--in that they reached the village level--but the economic gains in crops and materials were not usually adequately controlled to be kept

from the VC. Many economic operations were finally curtailed or abandoned in the face of inadequate security.

The hamlet program was unrealistically ambitious. The irrational confidence of Diem and Nhu was nearly always expressed in construction schedules and the reports of progress toward completion fed to Saigon from the field. "Completed hamlets" and a decline in incident rates were the grounds for optimism in both US and Vietnamese reporting. American agencies were usually in tandem with Vietnamese agencies and their own chiefs usually encouraged optimistic reporting. This was particularly evident in MAAG reporting.

Excessive demands in labor and materials were made on the peasants, particularly in the earliest period of construction. Diem's initial emphasis was on the peasants' moral obligation to do everything for themselves--even to fighting with sticks and stones. They were intended to be "self-help" (Ap Tuc Tuc) hamlets. The peasants, however, did not have the devotion, or the resources, expected or exemplified by the Ngo family.

The severity of the relocations and the failure to make adequate payment to many families, was particularly galling to the peasants. Corruption displayed in the misuse of pacification funds was not usually speedily punished, and sometimes there was no penalty at all. But local peasant communities knew when they had been cheated.

Thus, despite some signal successes in elements of the program (such as school construction, agricultural improvements, militia training, defenses construction, etc.) the lack of proper coordination, overambitious scheduling and reporting, unfair and unresponsive administration, and inadequate protection doomed the outcome.

#### Other Special Programs to Isolate the Guerrilla

The strategic hamlet and new life hamlet campaigns were conceived as comprehensive efforts to isolate the guerrilla from local support. Ancillary to these larger programs, more specialized efforts were begun.

"Chieu Hoi"--the "Open Arms"  
Surrender Program

The successful campaign by Magsaysay against the Communist Huks in the Philippines involved a two-pronged approach of "all-out force or all-out friendship." As uncooperative terrorists, the Communists would be destroyed. As ex-terrorists, willing to be rehabilitated, full assistance and encouragement would be given, including land, job training, financial assistance, etc.

Based upon this successful example in the Philippines, a national Chieu Hoi office was set up, involving close cooperation between the GVN, the USOM Office of Rural Affairs (which included men with long Philippine experience), and MAAG.

Diem announced a clemency offer on the first anniversary of the strategic hamlet program in the spring of 1963. The appeal was to the guerrillas' spirit of nationalism, love of family (to whom they could return), and unhappiness with the rigors of guerrilla life. The clemency announcement was a significant departure from previous hard-nosed treatment of most returnees by Vietnamese officials. Special "passes," or small leaflets, were dropped over VC-controlled areas, telling the would-be guerrilla where and how to turn himself in. VC families were visited and encouraged to contact their kin in guerrilla units. Testimonies of well-treated returnees were widely distributed.

By 1954, most provinces had set up rehabilitation centers in which the returnees live while being prepared to return to a normal life. Returnees also receive an allowance for clothes, food, and other small items.

The program seeks to reach not only hard-core Viet Cong--whom it is difficult to reach in the jungle--but primarily the borderline supporters who have involved themselves in part-time support as bearers, watchers, etc. The success of Chieu Hoi has varied from province to province, depending on the sensitivity and understanding of the province to its special spirit. Some provinces have received thousands of returnees, others relatively few.

The greatest effort--and success--has been effected around the traditional "Tet," the Chinese New Year, when Vietnamese are especially open to good will and the joys of

revisiting families and friends. The spirit resembles the Christmas season in the West, but Tet generally creates an even deeper emotional response among Vietnamese.

#### Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG)

The US Army Special Forces provided the backbone, beginning in 1963, of an effort to aid remote communities in defending themselves. A great deal of effort was given to the Highlands and areas on the periphery of jungles and swampland. Working as advisers--alongside their Vietnamese Special Forces counterparts--US teams of about a dozen men led in the training and operation of "strike forces" of 200-300 men. These units were designed to provide a mantle of protection to an area, with most of the men living at home near the camps, their families having been resettled, in many cases, in safe areas nearby. Special Forces teams carried out civic action projects--medical treatment and public works programs--as a part of their contact with the civilian population among whom they operated.

US Special Forces advisers have had considerable success among Highlander tribal groups, and the improvement of the security situation in the areas in which they work has usually been noticeable. The political character of the Vietnamese Special Forces, which was tied to Diem as a personal army, hampered the work until the end of 1963. Improper security screening during recruitment and moving of strike force personnel to posts far from their homes has created great difficulties and dangers for the Special Forces personnel involved. The basic motivation in the program is rooted in the willingness of Highlanders to defend their own home areas.

Improved opportunities and responsibilities for Highlanders have led to expectations not always consistent with the goals of the government. In September 1964, members of the Rhode tribe seized the radio station at Ban Me Thuot as an expression of desire for a greater participation in self-government. Through the efforts of US Special Forces leadership, the rebellion was resolved. But a potential source of trouble remains.

#### Force Populaire--The Ngo Dinh Can Program

As the strategic hamlet campaign was getting underway in 1962, an alternative approach to the program was being initiated by Ngo Dinh Can, youngest brother of Diem, and political boss of a dozen

or more provinces in Central Vietnam. Can was less educated and more peasant oriented than his brothers.

Can's idea was to place highly motivated and carefully trained peasants into the countryside to live and work among the peasants in a spirit of social fusion similar to the VC. These members of the so-called Force Populaire (Luc-Luong Nhan-Dan) were armed, but mainly for self-defense. They were not to seek out or attack the VC, but were to fight if the VC showed themselves. They were to be as inconspicuous as possible. Their role was to identify with the peasants and to build confidence that they would be around a long time. They were forbidden to engage in terror.

Selection of trainees was carefully made. Can insisted that all be volunteers and peasants. Members of the National Revolutionary Movement--Dien's mass party--were considered too decadent and not tough enough. Many recruits were sons of parents who had suffered at the hands of the VC.

Force Populaire members helped peasants at their normal chores of harvesting, woodcutting, weaving, hair cutting, and the like. They always paid their board so as not to be a burden on the villagers. They operated in company size, distributing themselves in villages of perhaps 4,000 people.

Training the Force Populaire was arduous and focussed on the development of esprit. Political activity was the major emphasis. Full and free discussion and self-criticism were a part of training. Instructors carefully engineered the absorption "in depth" of the instruction and the spirit of the program.

The pilot program was started in Thua Thien Province (location of the city of Hué). Later, cadres from the 17 Central provinces were trained and prepared to open training centers in their own provinces. By the time of the death of Dien, most of these province programs were operational. The early successes had encouraged Dien and even the strategic hamlet-minded Nhu. Dien had ordered the expansion of the program into the delta, and some of these cadres had been trained when the Dien regime was toppled.

Although there was a dilution of effectiveness when the province training centers began turning out their own units, the brief life of the Force Populaire stands as one of the best-conceived and -implemented programs attempted in Vietnam. Its close tie to the Ngo family doomed it after the November revolution. In essence, it was the intimate and protective expression of GVN interest in the life of the peasant, and the creation of

a viable and popularly attractive alternative to Viet Cong terror. It is possible that proper correlation of this program with the strategic hamlet campaign--with the Force Populaire serving as the spearhead in contested areas--might have achieved a doubly successful result. The acquisition of intelligence in the early stages of pacification--leading to identification of the Viet Cong supporters--is a delicate operation and requires the penetration of the outward "mask" of the village. This was to be a main objective of the Force Populaire.

#### Popular Forces (formerly Dan Ve) Motivation Training

In 1964, Frank Scotton, an employee of the United States Information Service began developing a training plan for village defenders markedly different in mood and results from conventional training systems. In Quang Ngai, working with GVN officials and other US advisers, he applied the basic principles of motivation training devised by Mao Tse-tung. Helping the fighter see clearly why he is fighting is fundamental in the training.

Nothing is taken for granted in training. Every key point is reviewed in the words of the listener, reconstructed in informal discussions after class. Trainees go to class as a unit. Communication with the instructor is through the squad leader. His mediating role enhances his position with his men, and reminds them of their image as a team, a close-knit fraternity. As with the Communists, it is emphasized that the fighter must be the protector and friend of the people.

Early results have been promising. As fighters, the specially trained units have performed well. One unit killed more Viet Cong in a month than the nearest government main force division in the same period. Intelligence from civilian sources has doubled where these units have been stationed. Many villages have requested units for their areas.

In 1965 these techniques were being extended to many provinces. The key success factors are quality and intensiveness of training, and communication in the process. As the psychologists might say: the training has been internalized.

Similar training programs have been initiated for smaller units to penetrate Viet Cong areas as prosecutors-executors for people's courts against known Viet Cong officials and terrorists.



### ATTEMPTS TO CUT EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Vietnam is sea and river oriented. The Viet Cong have made extensive use of sampans and junks. Since 1962, a government junk fleet--mostly of small sturdy wooden boats, both sail and diesel powered--has been searching coastal vessels systematically. Approximately 600 junks are in action in a four-region network. US Navy advisers work closely with the junk personnel.

Hundreds of thousands of searches each year have not produced large confiscations. One startling episode suggests possible slippage on the part of surface coastal patrols. A 100-ton junk was sighted by an American helicopter pilot in February 1965 off Phu Yen. After a fierce fight, GVN forces found a million rounds of ammunition and thousands of Communist-made small arms. On shore were 100 tons of military supplies. Documents on board clearly established the ship as having come from North Vietnam.<sup>9</sup>

Surveillance of coastal shipping has been substantially increased. The US Seventh Fleet has been actively patrolling the entire coastal area from Phu Quoc Island in the south to the 17th parallel. US Coast Guard cutters were also ordered to Vietnam for these duties in 1965.

### Special Forces Border Surveillance

Vietnamese and US Special Forces teams were assigned the responsibility of observation and harassment of infiltration routes in remote areas in 1964. No measurable effect on infiltration by this means has been observed, although steady small group infiltration elements have been repeatedly contacted. It is evident from recent press reports that, despite the increased involvement of US combat forces in South Vietnam, infiltration of troops and supplies from North Vietnam continues unabated.

### US and GVN Air Attacks on North Vietnam

In February 1965 air attacks were begun on military installations in North Vietnam. Elements of the supply system to South Vietnam have repeatedly been hit. As yet there is no clear evidence of critical impairment of supply or infiltration. A broader

purpose of the air attacks, of course, has been to induce a change in the North Vietnamese refusal to negotiate the war. In the larger sense the raids are efforts to pressure a general removal of support of the southern insurgency.

### Diplomatic Pressures

The United States has acted in behalf of Vietnam to discourage shipping of supplies to North Vietnam for use in the war. In 1965, West German shippers agreed to refuse to transport such materials to North Vietnam.

### ADEQUACY OF GENERAL AND LOCAL

#### ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY

Diem inherited an administration largely French in character, but hardly in quality. His efforts to energize the government through the development of a political nervous system for the administration often ended in abuses of sound administrative practice. The "fonctionnaire" spirit of the average Vietnamese official has weighed heavily in resolving operational problems in insurgency.<sup>10</sup> Lack of imagination and initiative, rooted in the often justifiable fear of being punished for using such qualities, has hampered pragmatic solutions to key problems. The influx of military officers into many of the key posts at national and provincial levels has further opened a chasm between civilians unaccustomed to Vietnamese military methods.

Only a tiny stream of graduate (70 a year) proceeds from Vietnam's National Institute of Administration. Viet Cong assassinations and kidnappings create more vacancies than these graduates can fill in the lower echelons of government.

Political instability since the fall of Diem has fostered further administrative caution and inaction. The French gift for paperwork, buttressed by an American love of papers, has created almost unbelievable complexities in getting things done. Scores of copies of documents require several signatures on each.

The sheer size of the US financial role in the GVN creates binational complications and occasional frictions that slow administrative processes. Despite progress, translation is a problem, and day-to-day communication among Vietnamese and American

counterparts lacks the natural fluidity essential to the intimate involvement of the officials in common projects.

Corruption is well known to the peasants, particularly the cheating done by their own village, province, and district officials. Lack of punishment has tacitly encouraged more corruption.

The average Vietnamese official has learned, for the sake of self-survival, to look for inspiration to his supervisor and not to the citizenry. The government does not currently depend on the consent of the people nor upon their taxes. On the contrary, the general orientation of the official is away from the peasantry, facing up the chain of command. With this attitude, the best-designed humanitarian programs can be rendered worthless in building a worthy GVN image.

Political instability has caused a high rate of personnel turnover in key positions. USOM province representatives have worked with as many as four or five province chiefs in a single year. Coupled with American military tours of only one year, the personnel change factor may be critical to effective counter-insurgent administration.

Disparity between plans and performance is not a characteristic peculiar to Vietnamese administration but it is a serious factor in administrative failure. The tendency has been to plan too big and to push too fast, without adequate attention to the quality of the program. US advisers have not always been blameless in this characteristic of program implementation.

Ngo Dinh Diem's bold plans of 1955-1957 for South Vietnam, many of which (Land Reform, for example) would have been helpful against the Communist insurgency if properly carried out, in the end became a burden of broken promises. The exalted democracy and human dignity preached by the government officials in the name of personalism became less and less evident to the unhappy peasant. Despite substantial accomplishments, the government of Ngo Dinh Diem progressively isolated itself from the realities of popular will and expressed need. The nearby Communists were able to manipulate, articulate, and amplify these popular frustrations. Diem himself, of course, personified the isolation of his whole administration from the people. Increasingly, Diem trusted fewer people until, finally, he looked only to his own family.

Despite the instability of the post-Diem period, and the concurrent ascendancy of Communist power, great efforts have been made, both by the GVN and the US officials, to bring about improvement. It is too early to assess the results.

### Performance of the Police Function

An essential ingredient to pacification, heretofore lacking, is beginning to be available: village policemen. Only a fraction of the required force of well-trained village police was in service before 1964. Resources control plans were made at the top level, but could not be carried out. HopTac, the regional pacification effort around Saigon, has included the training and hiring of thousands more village people for the police.

With the advisory guidance of USOM's Public Safety Division, a nationwide telecommunications net reaching to the village level has been established. Unfortunately, increasing VC control has fragmented and shrunken the coverage at the grass roots where it is most needed. Radio warning is part of a complete rural pacification system.

Identity card and family census programs are still being extended, particularly in correlation with pacification operations. Checkpoints are operated in these areas. Harbor police keep watch for the movement of supplies in and out of Saigon.

A new 1965 development that has brought good results is the antiterrorist operation center in Saigon. Manned by GVN and US officials, payments up to 100,000 piasters (\$1,000) are being made for information leading to the arrest of terrorists.

Improvements in the handling of the Viet Cong detainees in "re-education" centers is being made. Some centers have released as many as two-thirds of their inmates by faster and more liberal classification and processing. Improved rehabilitation programs and better housing have also been introduced. An American adviser works closely with this program.

### Scope and Degree of Control

The Communist insurgency has obviously erased or crippled the GVN rural presence in most of the nation. GVN instability at the top, increased VC weaponry and manpower from the north, and greater local VC support have combined to deny many government services to the countryside. The degree of VC control, however, varies greatly in different regions.

Fluidity of security precludes any useful geographical comment here. An interesting and often typical phenomenon in rural

areas is a kind of condominium--by alternation. The GVN official may be in the village by day, but leaves to make way for the VC propaganda rally at night. Efforts to certify areas as "cleared" or hamlets as "completed" have tended to deceive analysts as much as to help them. Some observers use the "rate of incidents" as a gauge. This, too, can be very deceptive. Incidents may go down when overwhelming GVN forces come in and the VC lie low; or incidents may be low because tacit understandings may have been reached between the two sides; or maybe the VC have the area so completely under control that incidents are pointless.

#### DEALING WITH PUBLIC OPINION

Information and propaganda activities in South Vietnam were substantially under Diem. While Diem's propagandists did a great deal (without much success) toward selling the national formula, personalism, the deepening crisis increasingly changed the content to anticommunism. Diem's--and, to a lesser degree, his successors'--problems stem from the one-way character of the communication, and from the disparity between words and deeds, promises and programs.

The United States has made substantial contributions in the propaganda field. JUSPAO, the Joint US Public Affairs Office, centers the efforts of MACV, USOM, and USIS--under the aegis of the last--in one US organization. Better US coordination is, of course, only a small part of the battle, but the signs of determined effort are now manifested among the American agencies.

The lack of a political consensus personified in party members at all levels affects the foundations of information planning and operations. And while studies have clearly been made since Diem's classic failure in the Buddhist crisis, the government has yet to learn how to be a good listener--sensitive to what the people want, and to what they want to hear.

Although the GVN has shown little concern for external public opinion, American officials have been keenly sensitive--too often after damage has been done. The publicity attendant upon use of nonlethal gas and village burnings by American troops are examples of this sensitivity.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SPECIFIC INCIDENTS,

### BATTLES, OR OPERATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

The widely reported Buddhist crisis and subsequent downfall of Diem are great landmarks of current Vietnamese history, neither of which was related directly to the Communist insurgency (although the Communists exploited each as much as they could).

Perhaps the most sensational incidents have been attacks directed at American installations. The rise of anti-American terror in 1965 significantly influenced the American community, as evidenced by the withdrawal of dependents. This undoubtedly had its impact on the Vietnamese, but presumably this has been offset by the greater US military involvement in the war.

Successful VC raids against Bien Hoa and Da Nang did not materially effect the war but may well have boosted Viet Cong spirits.

Raids by air on the north and B-52 raids on the south are 1965 innovations whose results have not been fully determined. Press reports indicate a salutary effect on South Vietnamese morale.

Perhaps the most meaningful discussion of specific incidents and symbolic victories centers on the tactic of minor incidents by the Viet Cong in local communities. A Viet Cong show of strength may be out of all proportion to its normal presence in an area, but the psychological impact can be great. In Quang Nam Province, for example, the village headquarters, two miles from the province headquarters (and on the main road), was destroyed by the VC. The portent of this incident was not lost on the surrounding hamlets.

## DETERMINATION AS RELATED TO INDOCTRINATION;

### MORAL AND ETHICAL ATTITUDES

Traditional Vietnamese ethical attitudes include both the nonviolent pacifism of classical Buddhism and the patriotic devotion to village and homeland associated with Confucianism. Vietnamese nationalism is deeply rooted in the history of their many struggles against the Chinese, the Mongols, the Khmers, and the French.



However, the official birth of South Vietnam was not initiated by the Vietnamese and did not stem from traditional heroism or institutions or national self-awareness. As noted previously, the Viet Minh had captured nationalistic tradition for themselves.

The nation-building mission of the new government under Ngo Dinh Diem included the development of determination or will in both leadership and citizenry as a whole. Without a pre-established political base, Diem--guided by his brother Nhu--attempted to create a national elan with personalism as the philosophical touchstone. Despite an enormous effort--through the various party indoctrination sessions at all bureaucratic levels--the creation of a "national formula" failed.

The many changes of leadership following the demise of the Ngos have demonstrated both the absence and the need of a political and ideological rallying ground for leadership at all levels.

There are signs of non-Communist revolutionary developments in South Vietnam today.<sup>11</sup> The vital question is whether these new forces--among the Buddhists, the Army, and the students--will form a confluence of interest for progress or clash with each other with disastrous results, leaving no alternative but communism.

The exhilarating revolutionary pledges of the Diem regime and its successors, as measured against their tawdry performances in meeting the promises, have seriously impaired morale among many Vietnamese leaders. By 1965, the fundamental crisis of motivation against insurgency still remains unsolved in South Vietnam.

Yet there is enough evidence of spirit and potential accomplishment to provide some hope for the future. The local successes of the Popular Forces training program, and the interrupted Force Populaire program of Ngo Dinh Can, have shown that proper motivation training in a local situation will work.

## Footnotes

1. The claim of the control of the Viet Cong will not be debated here. The reader is referred to the US Department of State's white paper, A Threat to the Peace--North Vietnam's Effort to Conquer South Vietnam (Department of State publication 7308, in two parts; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December, 1961). Although the measure of control by the north has been debated among competent observers, the sum of judgments appears to be that the control is almost total. Individual participants at the lowest level, however, may be unaware of the Communist character of the movement. The Peoples Revolutionary Party is the direct arm of the Lao Dong party, working within the National Liberation Front, at all levels, as the openly Communist part of the NLF truly southern.

2. Ibid., pp. 18-19. This publication, and a subsequent study, US Department of State, Aggression from the North (Department of State Publication 7839; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, February, 1965) are the main sources for Viet Cong organization in this study. The latter gives estimated troop strengths of VC main force units as 35,000, up from less than 20,000 in 1961. Part-time guerrillas are estimated at 60,000-80,000, p. 23.

3. Robert S. Allen and Paul Scott, "Russian Guerrilla Experts in Asia," Oakland Tribune, May 13, 1965. The rise in Russian technicians would probably in part be attributed to the installation of antiaircraft missiles.

4. The best commentary in English on Diem's personalist philosophy is provided by John C. Donnell in Problems of Freedom; Vietnam Since Independence, ed. Wesley Fishel (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), chap. 3.

5. Attributed to General J. Lawton Collins by Mark S. Watson, Baltimore Sun, February 1, 1955. Also see "Accord Reached on Vietnam Army," New York Times, January 21, 1955.

6. "O'Daniel Starts Vietnam Training," New York Times, February 13, 1955.

7. A discussion of the MSU position on the Civil Guard can be found in Robert Scigliano and Guy Fox, Technical Assistance in Vietnam (New York: Praeger, 1965), pp. 11-12. See also Scigliano's South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), pp. 163-167.

8. A useful comparison of the Malayan and Vietnamese programs can be found in Milton E. Osborne's Strategic Hamlets in South Vietnam: A Survey and Comparison (Data Paper No. 55; Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, April 1965). Osborne discussed the failures of the Vietnamese program.

9. "Aggression from the North," op. cit., pp. 15-17.

10. An interesting discussion of Vietnam's administrative heritage and problems in Nguyen Thai's Is South Vietnam Viable? (Manila, P.I.: Carmelo and Bauerman, 1962).

11. For a valuable analysis of the current socio-political convolutions in South Vietnam, see George A. Carver, Jr., "The Real Revolution in South Vietnam," Foreign Affairs, 43, No. 3 (April 1965), pp. 387-408.

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## The Chinese Civil War, 1927-1949

by

S.M. Chiu

### BACKGROUND

When the monarchy was overthrown in the revolution of 1911, China's hope to achieve political stability and complete independence was shattered by the emergence of divisive war-lordism. Known historically as Tuchuns, these war lords vied with one another for control of Peking; whoever occupied that city was recognized by foreign powers as the legal government of China. As the Tuchuns appeared to have nothing but their own selfish interests in mind, the only cohesive force with a progressive program--the Nationalist Party led by Sun Yat-sen--soon became the rallying point for all nationalists and antimonarchists. But Sun's party possessed neither military strength nor a disciplined organization, and despite the leader's constant efforts to strengthen his movement, it remained a mere pawn in the factional struggles, with its position largely dependent upon the whims of local commanders.

The destruction of China's centuries-old ideology--Confucianism--in the World War I years and after left an intellectual vacuum which a group of Westernizing iconoclasts sought in vain to fill with alien ideas. Leaders of the Chinese "Renaissance," symbolized by the May Fourth Movement, provided a great impetus for China's cultural transformation but no political direction. In the midst of this confusion and uncertainty, China suffered one humiliation after another at the hands of foreign powers, beginning with Japan's Twenty-one Demands in 1915 and culminating in Chinese frustration at Versailles.

Of the Western governments, only the newly formed regime in the Soviet Union showed any sympathy for China's plight. Dazzled by the early success of the Russian revolution and attracted by



the Marxist theories that inspired it, Chinese intellectuals began to organize socialist study groups in Peking, Shanghai, and other cities. In mid-1921, under the auspices of the Communist International and with the leaders of those study groups as nuclei, the Communist Party of China (CPC) held its first Congress in Shanghai, with 12 delegates representing about 50 members. The early leaders, such as Chen Tu-hsiu and Li Ta-chao, were middle-class intellectuals whose temperament was unfit for the task of violent revolution as envisaged by Communist doctrine. The members belonged to the intelligentsia, for the labor movement was yet in its infancy. In the three years that followed, membership grew only very slowly--to about 300 in 1923.

### CPC-Kuomintang Alliance

The political situation in China was highly complex. Sun and his Nationalist (Kuomintang) followers had attempted to set up an independent government in Canton in 1917 with the support of a local war lord. A delegate from the Communist International, Maring, had met Sun and felt that he and his party stood the best chance of leading a successful campaign against the war lords to unify the country. In 1922, Adolf Joffe, who was one of the ablest Soviet Russian diplomats and had participated in the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, was sent to China with a dual mission--to establish diplomatic relations with the Peking government and if that failed to see Sun, who was then in Shanghai, having been forced out of Canton for the second time.

Rebuffed by the Western powers, Sun was in a receptive mood. The result of the Sun-Joffe meeting was a joint declaration in which the Russian assured Sun of Soviet support. Shortly afterward, Sun returned to Canton, his hopes renewed. A delegation, headed by Chiang Kai-shek, was sent to the Soviet Union to study the Soviet political, economic, and military systems. In return the Soviet Union and the Communist International sent Michael Borodin, a professional revolutionary par excellence, to Canton as political adviser to Sun and the Kuomintang. The latter, hitherto a loosely organized party, was reconstructed on the model of the highly centralized Soviet party. Sun became its Director-General, and members of the CPC were admitted to membership. The CPC had, in its Third Congress in 1923, voted to allow its members to join the Kuomintang on an individual basis while retaining their identity as members of the CPC, the rationale being that at that particular stage of the Chinese revolution, the Kuomintang, which was regarded as the representative of the Nationalist-bourgeois class, was the leading party.

The objective of the CPC was twofold: (1) to expand while working under the banner of the Kuomintang and (2) to wrest eventually the leadership in the revolution from the latter. The effect of the entente was felt almost immediately. In 1924, three Communists were elected full members and six were elected reserve members of the Kuomintang's highest governing body, the Central Executive Committee. Membership in the CPC itself had risen to about 1,500 by 1925, a 400% increase in less than two years. Besides, through the influence of Borodin, Communists were appointed to key positions in all eight departments under the KMT Central Executive Committee.

The strategy of the Communists was based on the premise that the KMT was not a political party in the normal sense, but was rather a coalition of many parties and factions representing basically different philosophies temporarily amalgamated for the immediate purpose of national unification. As a member of this coalition the CPC would and could pursue a policy designed to seize control of the KMT by "allying with the KMT left-wing and moderates to isolate and defeat the right-wing." Thus, despite their minority position in KMT councils the Communists were able to muster enough support to expel the so-called Western-Hill faction, the group of conservatives who had opposed the alliance with the CPC in 1924. Following this, the former moderates headed by Hu Han-min became the new right wing to be eliminated. By 1926, Chiang Kai-shek, who was considered a member of the KMT left wing in 1924, had become the new right and was referred to with increasing frequency in Communist propaganda as the new war lord. Had the Communists succeeded in removing Chiang, they would have come to control the KMT in collaboration with the KMT left wing.

While they were gaining control of the KMT, the Communists also strove to dominate the peasant movement, infiltrate the revolutionary army, and assume leadership in the government which was founded in 1925. Mao Tse-tung, besides being secretary in the propaganda department of the KMT, was head of the Peasants' Training Institute in Canton, which turned out and sent large numbers of cadres to the Hunan countryside. There Mao, on an inspection tour, found peasant distress and discontent in explosive proportions. By the end of 1926, more than half a million of these poor peasants without the minimal means of living had been agitated and organized by Communist propagandist-agitators. Their uprisings, preceding the KMT's northern expedition in the latter part of that year, contributed significantly to the rapid progress made by the army. However, the Communists in the end failed to capitalize on the aroused peasantry, and when they belatedly adopted a radical land program in 1927 they in turn

alienated those army officers (mostly from the land-owning class) who might have been willing to do their bidding.

In the government, Communist influence grew apace following the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925. In late 1926, the left-wing dominated government moved to Wuhan, the tri-cities in central China where the labor movement was strong because of the location there of ironworks and munitions industries. Opposed to the removal of the government to Wuhan, some of the conservative KMT leaders consulted with Chiang Kai-shek, who was then in Nanchang with the army. He refused to go on to Wuhan, thus signalling the beginning of the end of the uneasy CPC-KMT alliance.

Perhaps CPC influence was strongest in the revolutionary army. The younger officers were all graduates of the Whampoa Academy, which had been founded in 1924 and of which Chiang was commandant. Besides the many Russian advisers, the instructional staff included many known Communists. Chou En-lai was at one time acting head of the political department. The political officers in the units were mostly Communists. Given the personal nature of Chinese armies, the Communists, by working on the commanders, could conceivably gain control of the army. But their radical social and economic policies and the conservatism of the army officers in the end proved to be irreconcilable, and before the CPC-KMT split only one division of the revolutionary army was controlled by the CPC.

#### Failure of CPC Strategy to 1927

Among the many highly complicated factors contributing to CPC failure in the 1920s, the following seem to be the most important:

1. In the last analysis CPC failure in China was the failure of the Communist International, whose policy from the beginning was double-edged: to help reorganize and strengthen the KMT and at the same time to help the CPC subvert it. Should the KMT become a centralized and disciplined organization it could not be easily subverted. On the other hand, the growth of CPC strength would certainly mean the concomitant radicalization of its social and economic policies, which would clash with the interests of the KMT moderates and conservatives, especially the officer class. In the latter eventuality the CPC would stand to lose, as demonstrated by Chen Tu-hsiu's telegram to the Communist International in mid-June of 1927 and by the wave of anticommunism led by military officers in the units supposedly under Communist control.

2. The most glaring failure of the CPC lies in the fact that it met with little success in gaining control of a significant part of the revolutionary army. Although Communist political officers were active in all eight armies, the officers and men were largely impervious to Communist propaganda. The high-ranking officers, like Tang Sheng-chih and Li Tsung-jen, joined the revolutionary movement only for personal gain, and even if they could have been persuaded to support the CPC for a time, they most certainly would have changed their minds, as they did time and time again later in their careers. The armies were "personal" armies, the origins of which go back to the Taiping Rebellion of the 19th Century. In order to have control of any army, the CPC would have had either to control the commander or to create one from among the peasants whom they had aroused.

#### Armed Uprisings

The end of the CPC-KMT entente came in 1927. Faced with a left-wing dominated KMT in Wuhan headed by Wang Ching-wei, Chiang Kai-shek and the more conservative elements set up their own party central organization in Nanchang and, after its capture, in Nanking. The Wuhan KMT continued to work with the CPC until July, when it too purged the party and government of CPC members. The termination of the alliance threw the CPC into considerable confusion. In the next several years, the party, carrying out instructions of the Communist International, experimented with one policy after another, searching for the right formula and changing the Chinese leadership after each failure. The first new policy was adopted at the time of the Fifth Party Congress, held in May 1927. It belatedly recognized the importance of harnessing the revolutionary strength of the mass of peasantry. However, before the Communists could launch their "agrarian revolution," their suppression by both the Wuhan and Nanking KMT forced them prematurely to stage the Nanchang Uprising on August 1, 1927. In Nanchang, the capital of Kiangsi Province, Communists had long been active. In 1927, the city and its environs were garrisoned by two loyal KMT armies under the command of Cheng Chien and Chu Pei-te and units of Chang Fa-kuei's famed Second Front Army which, however, were either under Communists such as Ho Lung and Yeh Ting or known to be sympathetic to the Communists, such as the division commanded by Tsai Ting-kai. All told, five undersized divisions plus two of Tsai's regiments, totalling about 21,000 men, participated in the uprising. Although plans had leaked to the loyal forces, the Communists had little difficulty in disarming the larger loyal garrisons in a few hours, before daybreak of August 1.

It is interesting to note that the Nanchang Uprising was staged in the name of the KMT. The Communists believed that both the Wuhan and Nanking factions of the KMT had deserted the revolution because "the classes they represented had played out their roles." They therefore claimed to be the logical heirs of the revolution.

As soon as the rebels had control of Nanchang, a meeting of KMT party representatives (those who sympathized with the uprising; mostly selected by the CPC) was held there to form a Central Revolutionary Committee of the KMT of China, replacing the old Central Executive Committee as the highest organ of political power. Most of the 25 members chosen for the new committee were indeed non-Communists, but most of them were not even in the city and those who were there were Communists. Under the committee were subcommittees for party affairs, workers' and peasants' affairs, propaganda, finance, plus a secretariat, a military staff group (headed by Liu Po-cheng and Chou En-lai), a political department, and a political security bureau. Under the committee was the army, using the name of the Second Front Army, with three armies (Twentieth, Eleventh, and Ninth), under the overall command of Ho Lung.

The ultimate objective of the uprising was to take Canton in the south and to use it as a base for a new revolution. On August 5, the entire force moved south, averaging 20 miles a day over mountainous terrain. Hunger, desertion, sickness, and intra-army squabbles took a heavy toll. When the army captured Swatow in the latter part of September, only one-third of the original strength remained, and shortly thereafter the drive toward Canton fizzled when the Communist force was badly defeated by superior loyal KMT troops in eastern Kwangtung. Peasant uprisings which the Communists had expected did not materialize. The only survivors of any consequence were the 1,000 men under Chu Teh who made their way to northern Kwangtung, and in May of the following year, at Chinggangshan, joined Mao's remnants of another uprising.

While the Nanchang rebels were making their way south, the CPC on August 7 convened an emergency meeting which (1) ousted Chen Tsung-shan as party secretary, and (2) reaffirmed the policy calling for peasant uprisings to turn the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a social revolution.<sup>1</sup> Mao was instructed to revive the fortunes of the CPC in his native Hunan Province and to organize the peasants for the "Autumn Harvest Uprising." Meeting with little success, Mao took with him a few hundred riotous miners to Chinggangshan, where he was joined by Chu Teh and his 1,000 men the following May. The survivors of the two uprisings, totaling not more than 2,000 men, were to become the nucleus of the future Red Army.

## THE INSURGENTS

With the failure of the policy of armed uprisings, the CPC was bifurcated, with most of the party leaders taking refuge in the foreign settlements of Shanghai while a few, led by Mao and Chu, remained in the rural areas of eastern Hunan, southern Kiangsi, western Fukien, and northern Kwangtung. The latter group, with its armed bands, was the only visible strength of the party during the next few years. Contact between the two groups was at best infrequent. Mao and Chu therefore were free to pursue their own policies in building a base in southern Kiangsi, expanding the army, and carrying out their own social and economic programs with or without the party center's approval. In two years, Mao clearly emerged as the most powerful Communist in Kiangsi Province, and by 1931 he was in a position to challenge the Shanghai party leaders for control of the entire party.

### Guerrilla Base

The first base of operations of Mao's army, if it can be called such, was Chingkangshan, one of the mountains in the Lo Hsiao range striding the two provinces of Hunan and Kiangsi. The entire base area had a circumference of 100 miles, accessible only through five easily defensible trails. Far from any towns, the Chingkangshan area had only a handful of village communities, with a total population of less than 2,000. However, the base was just as easily cut off as it was defensible. In the summer of 1928, for example, government troops captured all the towns on its periphery which the Communists had been raiding periodically for supplies. Thus Mao's army was deprived of even those distant sources of supply and was placed in difficult circumstances. Mao found it hard to pay the soldiers their per diem of five cents for oil, fuel, and vegetables. This forced Mao to lead his army out of the base that winter and march through southern Kiangsi and western Fukien to replenish his supplies by capturing stores from KMT troops and by exacting contributions from the local population.

By 1930 Mao had come to control a much larger area in southern Kiangsi and parts of western Fukien with a total population of some 3,000,000. This then became the main Soviet area until the Communists were dislodged in the later campaigns undertaken by Chiang Kai-shek. The entire area is hilly, especially Fukien. It is economically among the poorest in China, where most of the



rural populace were what Mao classified as poor peasants without the minimal means of making a living. Being much larger in area, the base was much less vulnerable to effective blockade than the earlier Chingkangshan base. The Communists in fact maintained an underground communication system with the outside through Swatow and Hong Kong. Like Chingkangshan, the southern Kiangsi base also straddled provincial boundaries. This is significant because of the tendency of the Chinese armies, all personal armies, to refuse to fight on "alien" soil.

As soon as the Kiangsi base had been consolidated, other "guerrilla bases" were established around the main base to serve as a protective shield and as bases of supply for guerrillas operating in the areas around them, which Mao called "guerrilla zones." When the enemy was cleared from such an area, the "guerrilla zone" was turned into a new regular base. In the guerrilla bases, all able-bodied males and females were armed to serve as auxiliaries of the guerrillas and as reserves. The people were educated politically. The same principles were the basis of the "liberated areas" during the war against Japan and of the bases that Mao ordered established in Manchuria in 1946.

#### Political Structure

After the uprisings of 1927, several "Soviet" regimes, all short-lived, were established: by Mao at Ch'aling (Hunan), Peng Pai at Kaifeng and Lufeng (Kwangtung), and Peng Teh-huai at Pingchiang (Hunan). During the Canton uprising in September 1927 the Canton Commune existed for a few days. It was not until May 1930, when the Communists were in stronger control of a relatively permanent base, that the CPC decided to erect a regular political structure. This decision by the Shanghai party representatives' conference was confirmed by the Central Committee in January 1931. An All-China Congress of Soviets was held in November 1931 in Juichin, capital city of the Kiangsi base. The Congress adopted a constitution establishing formally the Chinese Soviet Republic with the Central Executive Committee as its highest governing body. Mao was elected chairman of the committee and Chang Kuo-tao and Hsiang Ying were vice chairmen. Under the committee was the Council of People's Commissars. Chu Teh was appointed commander in chief of the Red Army. Anticipating the later constitution, the Juichin document declared a democratic dictatorship of peasants and workers, guaranteed political rights to the "toiling people," and assured the national minorities of the right of self-determination.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, a radical land law was passed confiscating lands owned by landlords and rich peasants.

Later, when other Soviet areas were formed, similarly structured governments were set up.

Following the "Long March," and after the rapprochement with the KMT in 1937, the Communist regime in Shensi was recognized by the national KMT government as the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Government, presided over by Lin Tsu-han with a People's Political Council headed by Kao Kang, then a local power. The form of the government in all Communist-held areas was not dissimilar to KMT governments or at least was acceptable to the KMT. Shortly after 1937, for example, in order to maintain the new entente with the KMT, the Communists who established the 19 "liberated areas" generally refrained from seizing outright political power even in those areas. Rather, broad-based "coalition" regimes were the rule, although there is no doubt that the Communists, by controlling the army and monopolizing the media of communication, were the unquestioned masters. This cautious attitude of the Communists remained until the new civil war in the 1940s. When the Communists were on the verge of final victory over the KMT, they called a meeting in Manchuria in 1948 of representatives of other political parties and of nonpartisan groups "preparatory to the convening of a new Chinese People's Political Consultative Council" which would then inaugurate the new government at Peking. Be it noted that in Communist theory the political structure reflects the actual conditions, and therefore the political structure is erected only when the "actual" conditions --social and economic--warrant it.

Over the governmental structure, of course, was the ubiquitous party organization. The party's Central Committee controlled the government, and in fact all the leaders in the government were party leaders as well.

#### Military Structure

As in the political structure, the command structure has been changed several times in the history of the Chinese Communist revolution in accordance with changing conditions. Under the limitations of the insurrectionary period, 1927-1945, the high command was simple. There was something like a high command in the Kiangsi period, with Chu Teh as chairman of the People's Military Council under the Central Executive Committee. Chu was also commander in chief of the Red Army, but his effective command reached only those units in the central Soviet area, while others, such as those under Ho Lung and Chang Kuo-tao, remained relatively independent. At central headquarters were six

departments: general affairs, service and supply, operations, intelligence, education, and medical service. This simple organization continued until the period of the war against Japan, when the Communist armies were technically placed under the National Military Commission in Chungking.

After 1945, the vastly expanded army and the occupation of more territory necessitated a reorganization of the high command. From 1945, the Communist field operations were directed by a headquarters of the People's Liberation Army with Chu as commander in chief. Under headquarters were 11 departments, including a general staff, a rear services department, a training department, an adjutant's office, a department of operations, a liaison department, and an air force department. Despite the elaborate organization, it is doubtful that headquarters had regular contact with the field armies, each of which was commanded by a senior officer and operated in areas far from the Communist center. By the end of 1948, when the Communists assumed the offensive, the designations of the Communist forces became more formal: the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Field Armies, each in turn composed of two or three armies. The system of divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions, companies, platoons, and squads followed closely the KMT armies. Departures from this conventional organization occurred in some special areas during the war against Japan when, probably because of difficulties in communications, there were a number of independent columns and detachments, as there were also in guerrilla forces not yet raised to regular army status.

Another exception to conventional organization was the New Fourth Army, composed of survivors of the Kiangsi campaigns left behind at the time of the Long March. When the war against Japan broke out, these emerged from their hiding places, and at the insistence of the Communists were recognized by the Chungking government as the New Fourth Army consisting of 12,000 men under the command of Yeh Ting. After the so-called New Fourth Army Incident of January 1941,<sup>3</sup> in which the Communists met a disastrous defeat at the hands of the government army, the New Fourth was reorganized on a regular basis with Chen Yi replacing the captured Yeh Ting as commander.

A unique feature of Communist military organization is the hierarchy of political officers, representatives of the party, that exists alongside the military personnel. At each level of the Red Army command structure was a party committee down to the battalion level, and a party branch and party cell at the company and squad levels respectively. Attached to each unit was a political commissar (called party representative before 1930). Usually

the political commissar served as secretary of the party committee at the same level. His job was to supervise the carrying out of policy determined or transmitted by the party committee. More often than not, he had precedence over the commanding officer of the unit. In some units, where the commanding officer was a faithful party member, the two posts might be held by one man. It appears that in addition to his control functions, the commissar and the party committee (he alone in the early army) performed also the functions of staff officers. At the headquarters of each unit command was a political department, besides the other functional departments. This department was responsible for the implementation of party policy, cultural activities in the unit, and other activities for control purposes. The director of this department was often concurrently the commissar, making the latter the most powerful man in the unit. The department usually had an organization section (to keep records of personnel), propaganda section (for propaganda and cultural activities), security section (intelligence and investigation), and civilian relations section (discipline and civilian mobilization). Organization of the department in larger units (such as army or division) might be much more elaborate, with sections for such activities as youth work.

In addition to the regular military structure described above, because the Communist-held areas were highly militarized, there were always numerous paramilitary organizations. One of these was the militia organization, which was extremely important to guerrilla warfare. It symbolized the "people's" participation. In the Kiangsi and early Yen-an periods, the militiamen were called Red Guards. Practically every member of a peasant association was a Red Guardsman. Given some quick training in the fundamentals and some weapons the regular army could spare, they aided the regulars as scouts, messengers, and saboteurs. After 1937, the Red Guards were renamed the militia (Min Ping) for obvious political reasons. They provided a reservoir of manpower, and if need be militia units could be sent to the regular units as replacements or as "combat teams." By 1945 the number of militiamen had reached 3,000,000. These militiamen formed the lowest of three levels of the Communist military establishment, the others being the guerrillas and the regulars.

#### Logistics and Training

Throughout the Kiangsi period, the entire Communist movement was rural oriented. P. Mif, who had been the representative of the Communist International in China in 1931, wrote that in 1927,

53.8% of the CPC members were from the working class, whereas in 1934 only 8 out of 821 delegates to the Second Soviet Congress in Juichin were workers. This ruralization of a party which claimed to be the vanguard of the proletariat was reflected in the army. In 1930, Mao's army was made up of 40% Hunan peasants, 20% prisoners of war, 20% survivors of the earlier uprisings, and 20% new recruits. The last three categories were, of course, predominantly of peasant background.

Mao has written that these men needed at least six months of training before they could be used in actual combat. However, the almost continuous fighting in the early years rendered even the most basic drills impossible. They therefore had to gain combat experience through fighting, and whatever training there was had to be done during infrequent respites. Supplies were unknown, at least until after 1931. The army lived off the country --expropriating landlord property, capturing stores from the enemy, and taking forced contributions from the population. The men were lucky to own one uniform for all seasons. Their weapons consisted of a variety of muskets, shotguns, and red-tasseled spears, all of ancient vintage. In general, one out of every two carried firearms, and the Communists consoled themselves by saying that unarmed men would have more incentive to disarm the enemy.

After the founding of the Soviet regime at Juichin in 1931, some efforts were made to improve the logistical situation. A supply and services department was created at headquarters. The Red Army Academy was founded with Liu Po-cheng as president, and military schools were opened in all Soviet areas, producing such future officers as Hsiao Hua.

The new recruits in the early Red Army were mostly impressed into service, while the prisoners of war were mostly mercenaries who might have been fighting for the war lords for years without feeling any sense of loyalty to anyone or any cause. Mao was troubled by the "banditism," and "anti-discipline" mentality of these men, and outside observers (Nation, June 13, 1930) called them just "roving bands" and doubted that they had any revolutionary organization.

After the founding of the Juichin government, "mobilization" technically replaced coercion as the method of recruitment. "Kuang Chun" (army expanding) movements were launched periodically to persuade those of military age to join the army. Efforts were made to improve the image of the soldier. The land law provided, on paper at least, all army men with a plot of land to be cultivated for them by the government. A resolution passed by the first Soviet Congress in 1931 accorded army personnel many

additional privileges, including free entertainment, free education for their children, rent-free housing for their families, and discounts at government-operated stores. By these measures, the Communists were able to increase their army to 300,000 men by 1934. The same method of recruitment remained Communist practice through the next two decades. (A military service law was adopted only after the Communists had achieved power on the mainland.)

### Doctrine and Indoctrination

Mao's military ideas have been discussed by many writers. They may be summarized here briefly. His strategic concepts start from his definition that war is "the highest form of struggle to solve the contradictions between classes, between nations, and between states, which has existed since the beginning of private property and economic classes." Understanding this concept of the nature of war is necessary for an understanding of the "laws" of war. Like politics, of which war is a continuation, wars have their particular laws which can be known. Once known, the strategy for a particular war can be planned; and with the strategy so planned, any war can be won. Conditions in China led Mao to the following dictum:

Strategically, fight a war of attrition; tactically, strive for quick decisions; fight no positional war, but insist on war of movement; aim not at the repulsion of the enemy, but at his annihilation. Never strike a two-fisted blow, but always attack with concentrated forces; establish small territorial bases near the enemy; maintain a minimum unified command.

Tactically, too, Mao is certain there are laws that can be determined by military leaders, by observing the behavior of the enemy and the habits of their own men. An army can win even without modern weapons, according to Mao, because war is not a match of arms alone, but more importantly, a match of human and psychological factors; weapons must be used by men.

In the early years, when the Red Army was still far inferior to KMT armies, Mao summarized Red tactics by using 16 Chinese characters which said:

When the enemy advances, we retreat;  
When he rests, we harass him;



When he is weary, we attack him;  
When he retreats, we pursue him.

The running tactics of Mao naturally entail the loss of territory. But to Mao time is gained by giving up space. Therefore this is only the first of three stages in a protracted war. When the enemy has extended to the maximum limit (inevitable in the case of a small country, like Japan, invading a large country, like China), the second stage--stalemate--is reached. The main form of struggle should then be guerrilla war, with the regular army held in reserve preparatory to the third stage, which is the general counteroffensive. Guerrilla war, to Mao, is basically offensive war. The guerrillas must not only seek to destroy the enemy, but must also try to expand, to improve, and eventually to become regularized and be able to fight conventional war. The correct policy, according to Mao, is:

Offense in defense; quick decisions in tactical battles while the over-all strategy is to wage a protracted war; coordination with regular forces; establishment of guerrilla bases; gradual transformation of guerrillas into regular units, and transformation of guerrilla war into a war of movement; correct leadership.

To attain maximum effect, guerrilla leaders should be alert and retain the initiative at all times. According to Mao, there are three requirements in handling guerrilla forces: the ability to bring them together in concentration, the ability to disperse them when faced with adverse conditions, and the ability to change the position or the area of operations without unnecessary waste of time. Even in modern war, the importance of guerrillas is obvious. They are substitutes for artillery, by threatening the enemy deep in his own lines; they serve as the eyes and ears of the regular forces by their bold--and undetected--sallies into the enemy rear.

Mao has always insisted upon flexibility. His changing strategy during the civil war is an example. There was greater parity of strength of the two sides during the civil war, particularly after 1945, than Mao's earlier dicta envisaged. Therefore instead of the earlier postulates of a three-stage war, Mao elevated each of the three stages, so that the first stage became that of mobile warfare, the second stage that of limited offensives, and the third stage that of general offensive. But tactical concepts remained the same as before: strike first at isolated and scattered enemy forces, capture small towns and rural areas before attacking urban areas, the aim is to eliminate the enemy and not to occupy territory, muster absolute numerical superiority, and encircle the enemy in every engagement. In a directive to the party in late 1947, Mao said:

We must not fight any campaign for which we are unprepared, or which we cannot win. . . . We must be courageous in combat, be unafraid of sacrifice, and never refuse wearisome, uninterrupted combat. . . . Replenish ourselves by capturing all the enemy's weapons, and most of his manpower. . . . Carry out land reforms in all liberated areas. . . .

In his earlier writings Mao paid particular attention to retaining the initiative in war. He said: "In any war, the two sides struggle for the initiative on the battlefield." Initiative, according to Mao, is the freedom of movement without which troops are faced with annihilation and defeat. The best way to retain the initiative, he said, is systematically to confuse the enemy and attack him by surprise. "To make the enemy think that every tree and shrub along our line is a soldier is one example," he said.

By 1948 the tide in the civil war had turned in favor of the Communists. Mao enjoined the party:

In the past, because we had to fight a guerrilla war in rural areas, we permitted the party organizations and army leaders in various localities to remain largely autonomous . . . producing undisciplined . . . conditions. . . . The present situation demands that we do our utmost to overcome these . . . conditions . . . so as to facilitate the transition from the guerrilla form of war to regular war.

In early 1949, when Mao no longer expected any more serious fighting, he directed that the army be gradually transformed into a "work team," to participate in taking over and managing urban centers, in leading and organizing labor unions, and in operating schools. Indeed, the army itself was looked upon by Mao as a school. He said in early 1949: "The 2.1 million-man army is the equivalent of thousands of universities and high schools. The army itself must fill the need for cadres."

To fight Mao's kind of war requires complete control by the high command of both officers and men. Hence the political control system throughout the army described above. The system, which had existed in the revolutionary army of the 1920s, began in the Red Army in 1929 as a measure to combat the bandit tendencies of the army. Controls were exerted through many channels: education (both political and cultural), entertainment (recreational activities with political dosages), accusatory meetings (arouse the soldiers to hate the enemy), small group

discussions (usually platoons to check on the thinking and attitudes of soldiers), review meetings after battles (criticism and self-criticism of performance). The political control system also aimed at heightening the morale of the officers and men by fostering a feeling of a common goal, common danger, mutual confidence, and a recognition that progress was being made.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the army was and is considered part of the governmental machinery, and as such it was integrated with other sectors of political-state activities. It was required to "study" government policies, express support of multifarious party-manipulated campaigns, and participate in economic activities such as farming and reclamation. The work of Wang Chen's brigade at Nanniwan near Yen-an during the war against Japan has been much ballyhooed. The result of all these, despite many abuses, was that "orders given to the leaders of the Chinese Communist armies . . . and passed down to subordinates never were questioned . . . they were fulfilled to the letter. . . . This was achieved through indoctrination and control."<sup>5</sup>

### Techniques

While no nation can claim a monopoly of martial virtues, the quality of a fighting man is the product of his social environment. C.H. Wu has remarked:

Who has ever cared for the Chinese soldier--neglected and despised in his own country and ridiculed abroad? Who has ever cared for the Chinese army--defeated in so many wars, and until recently, engaged in mutual strife bringing China to the verge of ruin.

Yet there are others who think that the Chinese soldiers are the most malleable material and can be turned into good fighters. This was proved again and again by the American-trained armies that fought in Burma. However, the same armies acted quite differently later in Manchuria. We have to conclude therefore that the decisive factors are external to the soldiers themselves--factors such as leadership.

Chinese soldiers are known to be able to stand terrific physical punishment and still walk a considerable distance on an empty stomach. During the civil war in the '40s, large numbers of Communist soldiers, lying motionless, were strafed by government planes at low altitude time and time again until the trenches were strewn with dead bodies and drenched with blood. According

to the government pilots, there was never any slightest movement on the ground during the entire attack.

Guerrilla techniques are characterized by deception, surprise, and mobility. Night marches are the rule (although during the war years Chinese soldiers were known to have difficulty seeing at night because of vitamin A deficiency). Some examples of techniques used are these: planting nails and sickles on roads they knew the enemy would pass; depositing cubes of sugar in fuel tanks of enemy trucks, causing carbonization in cylinders that may cease to function unexpectedly at any time; and on occasions dynamiting enemy industries by stuffing coal with explosives.

Noncombat techniques have been used effectively by the Chinese Communists from 1927 on. These included direct infiltration of enemy ranks, writing letters to acquaintances in enemy units, and front-line propaganda by means of loud-speakers. In 1948 and 1949, cities like Peking, Nanchang, Changsha, and others fell to the Communists in rapid succession as a result of defection or surrender without fighting. Earlier, in the mid-1930s, Communists sent political workers to the high ground close to the lines of the Manchurian army facing them to sing patriotic songs and shout to the men under Chang Hsueh-liang, telling them that the Communists did not want civil war but only wanted to fight the Japanese as the northerners did. The result was that the Manchurian army was demoralized. Shortly afterward, Chang Hsueh-liang held Chiang Kai-shek captive for two weeks in the celebrated Sian Incident, after which another KMT-CPC entente was effected.

Terroristic methods have been used only sparingly by the Chinese Communists. Political assassinations and wanton killing of civilians and captured enemy troops as means of reprisal or intimidation were practiced in the earlier period. Probably later realizing that by killing one man they could make many more enemies, the Chinese Communists have generally refrained from terrorism since 1930. Gradually, from the 1930s, they even adopted a policy of giving preferential treatment to prisoners of war, a policy first used by Mao at Ching Kangshan. Captives were given rousing "welcomes" and medical care if needed. Officers would be subjected to two or three weeks of indoctrination and given a choice of remaining or going back to their own side. If they chose to return, they were bound to sow seeds of dissension among their own men. The Communists even treated Japanese POWs in this manner. Some of the Japanese POWs worked effectively as propagandists for the Chinese Communists.

### Local Support

Mao Tse-tung has called his army the "people's army," and has said that the army without the support of the people is like fish without water. In areas occupied by the Communists, the Communist regimes have always adopted social and economic policies designed to win the support of the majority of the population. On the other hand, in those areas the people had no choice but to do as told.

In order to win civilian support, or probably more truly to create the impression that they have local support, the Communists in 1942 made "civilian relations" one of the most important tasks of the army's political departments. For days during the Chinese New Year season, meetings were held in which army representatives pledged their love of the people, and in turn the civilian representatives of local civic organizations promised to support the army. Such meetings were followed by exchange visits with appropriate gifts and by social festivities. Oaths were taken by the army collectively to abide by the Three Disciplinary Rules and Eight Points of Attention which were laid down by Mao in 1928, enjoining the army not to disturb the people in any way. There is no doubt that these symbolic acts of the army and the people were stage-managed, as are mass rallies in support of government policies of a later day.

### External Support

It is difficult to determine the amount of external support given to the Chinese Communists. There is evidence that during the first years of the CPC's existence the Communist International sent a monthly subsidy of \$30,000, besides the direct advisory assistance and the training given to Chinese Communists in Russia. After 1927, contact was undoubtedly maintained between Moscow and the party organization in Shanghai. But Mao, in relatively isolated Kiangsi, probably had no direct communications until 1931, and then only by radio. Russian support, therefore, was indirect and was in the following forms:

1. The Russian Soviet system of government and army organization were prevalent in the Communist areas. Many of the Chinese Communist leaders were trained in Moscow's Sun Yat-sen University, founded in 1925 specifically to train Chinese revolutionaries; in 1926 there were 600 Chinese students there.

2. Foreign Communists probably worked in the Chinese Soviet areas at one time or another. A German Communist, with the Chinese name of Li Teh, was reported living in Juichin.

3. In the Soviet areas there was a Sino-Soviet Friendship Association with mass membership and some Russian participation and support. It never failed to express support of Soviet foreign policy.

4. Although there is no hard evidence that the Russians actually gave direct assistance to Yen-an, the Russian occupation of Manchuria in late 1945 clearly aided the Chinese Communist entry into Manchuria.

5. The Soviet Union had agreed to evacuate Manchuria three months after the surrender of Japan. But they refused to let the Nationalist armies land at Dairen in October 1945 and again near Yingkow. Immediately thereafter, Chinese Communists began to operate in the area. Also in Manchuria the Russians turned over all Japanese arms to the Chinese Communists under Lin Piao, who in a year forged a new army from the guerrillas and Japanese arms.

Throughout the war years, aid from the outside continued to trickle into Communist areas. The Canadian Dr. Bethune worked and died in the "liberated areas." Indian medical missions contributed significantly to the improvement of health facilities.

How much the American effort to mediate in China in 1944-1947 contributed to Communist strength is conjectural. Possibly Chiang's unilateral cease-fire, on advice of General George Marshall, in the spring of 1946 in Manchuria gave the Communists a respite in which they regrouped north of the Sungari River and later emerged as a well-drilled army.<sup>6</sup>

#### Political Strategy

As internal war is essentially action to isolate and defeat the existing government, it is not necessary that it be carried out by violent means. The Chinese experience shows that if the civil war had been a contest of arms alone, the Communists would have long since perished. The Communists have claimed that their success in the civil war was due to three things: their party organization, their independent army, and their policy termed the united front (UF). The importance of the first two is obvious. However, it may be recalled that even when they



boasted an expanding army and a burgeoning party organization, the Communists met with scant success in the total civil war situation until after 1937, when they developed their political strategy, the UF, to supplement their military action. The UF, according to Mao, is a process in which the CPC forms an alliance with as many groups of the population as possible against one enemy at a time, using methods and forms of struggle determined by the specific circumstances. The UF was later institutionalized in the form of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. (In other places, it may be a national liberation front, or a people's party, or a national salvation association.) In this alliance, the Communist Party would try to assume the leadership overtly or covertly, the principal enemy at a particular stage would be determined, the main form of struggle (military, political, or identitive) would be decided upon, and the principal and secondary allies would be won over by a common program. After the elimination of one enemy (never more than ten per cent of the population in a given situation), a new program would be formulated requiring a new alliance against a new enemy who was an ally previously. This process would go on until the Communists were clearly in control. When the struggle was going on, the CP would try to "raise its allies to its own political level" by "ideological" campaigns, so that while the allies were helping to eliminate a common enemy they themselves were being converted into active supporters of Communist policy, not realizing that they themselves might be eventually eliminated or transformed. This UF operation could be conducted on the national level or local level or on all levels simultaneously. Even when the main form of struggle chosen was a military one, as in China in 1946 and 1947, the UF constantly played up those characteristics of the KMT in opposition to which the CPC and the liberal-moderate groups were united. As a result of such tactics the Democratic League went over to the Communist side in 1948, thus further isolating the weakening government.

#### Relation to Events

The Chinese Communists clearly benefited from external events. When they were at the end of their resources, during 1927-1930, the KMT government was faced with much more ominous challenges from the war lords in both the north and south. Several times when the government troops were closing in on the Communists those troops had to be redeployed for use against the war lords, allowing the Communists to recuperate and grow.

When the war lords were temporarily pacified, China was threatened by the Japanese in Manchuria and then in North China. This not only forced the KMT government to send its best troops to areas farther away from the Red bases, but also afforded the CPC an opportunity to win the sympathy of all patriotic elements by clamoring for immediate resistance to Japanese aggression. This the government steadfastly refused to give, on the ground that the country must first be united and better prepared. The government was undoubtedly alienated from large segments of the intelligentsia, particularly the writers and students, who became effective propagandists for the Communist cause. When the Sino-Japanese War finally broke out in 1937, and when the Communists finally agreed to a détente, they gained considerable freedom to expand their army and extend the territory under their control.

### COUNTERINSURGENCY RESPONSE

#### Political and Ideological Background

The KMT under Chiang Kai-shek nominally unified all China by military means in 1928. The capital was moved from Peking to Nanking. The government was supposed to be based upon the doctrines of Sun Yat-sen who had envisaged a period of political tutelage (KMT party rule) in which the people were to be educated in the processes of democracy before constitutional government was inaugurated. But the Nanking government was not a totalitarian government, and in fact the KMT itself never succeeded in welding its vast membership into an integrated party. Chiang Kai-shek himself, who consolidated control of the party and government in 1931, was more of a balancer of many groups than a personal dictator.

The ideology of the KMT consists of Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People--Nationalism (Min Tsu), Democracy (Min Ch'uan), and People's Livelihood (Min Sheng). The concept of Min Tsu was originally limited to the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty. After the revolution, when Sun became disillusioned with the Western powers, his nationalism acquired a new meaning, embracing anti-imperialism in China, to some extent, as well as abroad. This concept of nationalism assumed equality of the five major races in China, and Sun seemed to imply that he favored such equality. The concept was negated, however, by his own chauvinism--Chinese assimilation of other ethnic groups. Although his successors paid lip service to racial equality and

self-determination, the minorities in fact were directly ruled by Nanking through such agencies as the Tibetan and Mongolian Affairs Commission, in contrast to the Communist official insistence upon the right of the national minority to secede from China. The welfare of the minorities was neglected, and their own cultural heritages were suppressed.

Democracy was envisaged by Sun as the ultimate goal of the revolution. It encompassed the exercise by the people of the four powers of election, recall, initiative, and referendum. The government was an "all-function" government, vested with five functions--executive, legislative, judicial, control, and examination--in contrast to the traditional three in the West. The functions corresponded to the five divisions in the Nationalist government. Sun also "cast aspersions on the idea of natural rights . . . [which] has given rise to a school of interpretation [justifying] the disregard, if not suppression, of popular freedoms, and the emergence of an irresponsible and dictatorial, if not also totalitarian, government."

The third principle, People's Livelihood, has often been called Sun's communism or socialism. Sun's own statements sometimes confused the problem. What this entailed is simply equalization of land ownership and regulation of capital. To carry out both, Sun rejected the class struggle and violence. For the former, he proposed that the "unearned increment" of land value accrue to the state (an influence of Henry George), and the latter was to be accomplished by state ownership of principal industries. This is a progressive idea, and if carried out, might have been the answer to China's social and economic problems. Unfortunately, neither the equalization of land ownership nor the regulation of capital was adopted as public policy until the KMT government had moved to Taiwan, leaving the Communists to claim that they were the political heirs of Sun Yat-sen.

Following the termination of the CPC-KMT alliance in 1927, the KMT purged many Communists and many educated youth suspected of having Communist sympathies. This not only weakened the CPC, but also deprived the KMT of a group of militant workers. According to Chien Tuan-sheng, the foremost Chinese political scientist, the exit of the militant elements from the party tended to encourage the incoming of the conservative and even reactionary elements of Chinese society. Thus the KMT became not only conservative but also complacent. It did not bestir itself to adopt a broad social and economic reform program until after 1945 when it was brought face to face with militant communism. But by then it found itself lacking in men of vigor to carry through such a program.

## Clique Politics

Like the CPC, the KMT party structure was, and is, pyramidal. The highest organ of authority is the National Congress, the membership of which was elected by the Congress of the next lower level (province), and the provincial congress was elected by the district (county) congress. A district was divided into areas (Ch'u), which elected delegates to the district congress. The party organization, comprising the executive and supervisory committees, was elected at each level by the congress of the same level, except in the case of the Ch'u organization, which was elected by all the members. There were special party organizations formed among seamen, railway-workers, and the armed forces, all placed directly under the central organization. As was the case with its Communist counterpart, the National Congress was too unwieldy, with a membership of some 600. It rarely played a significant role in making party policies--a function which devolved upon the Central Executive Committee which it elected. The most powerful group was the Standing Committee of the Central Executive Committee. This too grew in size to 50 in 1945.

During the lifetime of Sun Yat-sen, that founder of the party was the single most powerful leader, with precedence over the entire party organization. After his death in 1925, the Second Congress of the KMT declared that he would remain forever the leader. This made it virtually impossible for anyone else to aspire to the leadership without being considered irreverent. Moreover, there were few who commanded party-wide respect, except Hu Han-min (who died in 1936), Wang Ching-wei (who deserted to the Japanese in 1938), and Chiang Kai-shek, who held actual power by controlling the armed forces. But in the exigencies of war, the Extraordinary Party Congress in 1938 amended the party statute to establish the new post of Tsungtsai or director, to which Chiang was elected. In this post, Chiang became the arbiter of party affairs, had the veto over all Central Executive Committee decisions, and generally achieved an unchallenged position.

An all-powerful party leader did not, however, preclude the existence of factions and cliques within the party. These cliques were all loyal to the leader. In general there were three main factions:

1. The "Organization" Group. This group, headed by the Chen brothers (Li-fu and Kuo-fu), is so called because it continually controlled the Organization Department of the Central Executive Committee of the KMT; the most important party office. With control over the party rank and file, the group gradually

extended its influence to education. Members of this group were generally conservative in social and economic matters. They were intensely anti-Communist, but only to perpetuate their own power.

2. Army Group. This group has been known as the Whampoa clique because its leaders were graduates of the Whampoa Military Academy. This clique share the aims of the Organization Group. As China became increasingly militarized in the early 1930s this group became a real challenge to the other factions for control. Most of the army and division commanders belonged to it.

3. The Political Study Group. This group included civilian leaders of the party who were mainly interested in cementing their control over the country's industries, business enterprises, and banking interests. During the war against Japan some of them controlled provincial governments (Chang Chun, for example). By and large, members of this group were always more mature and slightly more enlightened. They were more tolerant of democratic procedures, and therefore more critical of the arbitrariness of the first two groups.

Alongside these groups which vied for power in the center, there were numerous minor cliques, represented by local commanders like Li Tsung-jen in Kwangsi, Feng Yu-hsiang in the north, and the Moslem generals in the northwest. Although nominally under Chiang's command, these generals, with their small but usually well-trained armies, remained in practice independent of Nanking control. Most of them adopted their own--usually quite forward-looking--social and economic programs for their own domains and were loath to fight Chiang's wars, be it against the Communists or Japan, unless their own position was at stake.

#### Rural Economic Conditions

China during the decade after 1929 suffered from long years of war. The countryside was desolate. Drought and famine struck North China, affecting an estimated 20,000,000-25,000,000 peasants. Many were driven to banditry. One writer estimated that there were 5,000,000 armed men--soldiers and bandits--living off the countryside and costing \$1 billion a year. The rural population further suffered from soaring prices and, in one province, 44 different kinds of taxes. Even in normal times, the life of the rural population was marginal, especially for the tenant farmers who might have to surrender as much as 80% of their crops to the landlord.

The most serious problem in the countryside was that of land tenure. Although Sun's economic ideas anticipated a gradual redistribution of land and the KMT government had passed a land law, nothing was done to carry it out, primarily because most of the members of the party had the greatest interest in maintaining the status quo. This and the concomitant problems of illiteracy, marketing, and medieval farming methods were largely left to enterprising individuals with the assistance of foreign, mainly American, missionaries. The best example of the former was Dr. James Yen, a Yale graduate, who launched his Mass Education Movement near Peking in the 1920s. Despite some early success which brought him international fame, his gradualist approach ran into the vested interests of local powers, allied with the military elements and gentry-controlled secret societies. At any rate these and other efforts in rural reconstruction were cut short by Japanese invasion in 1937.

### Local Government and Control

The Chinese political system has been called "an autocracy imposed on a social democracy." The most conspicuous feature of Chinese local government from the 11th Century to the 20th was the pao-chia system. When it was first adopted by Wang An-shih in the Sung dynasty, it had a purely military function. Later it became an administrative system, and in 1932 when Chiang re-instated it in Kiangsi Province it was primarily for purposes of social control and mobilization in the campaigns against the Communists. A decade later, the pao-chia units became units in local "self-government."

The lowest unit was the hu (household), with the oldest member as head. Ten hu made up one chia (headed by an elected chief); ten chia formed one pao (chief elected); several pao constituted a hsiang (village); and several hsiang formed a hsien (district). In the 1930s, all the chiefs of chia, pao, and hsiang were appointed by the hsien government. At the chia level, the chief simply carried out instructions handed down from the pao chief who, with the aid of a pao troops commander, similarly carried out instructions from the hsiang. The pao's responsibilities consisted mainly of tax collection and filling military service quotas. The latter could be carried out by "buying" substitutes from some outside area. This was illegal but always accepted. Very often a hsiang's quota was filled in this way without going to the various pao. This gives a clue to the quality of KMT soldiers. There was little, if any, contact between the people and the agencies above the hsiang. Local politics usually



centered around the secret societies (most conspicuous in southern China was the Ko Lao Hui) controlled by the local gentry. The KMT existed on paper, but only at the hsiang and hsien levels.

During the anti-Communist campaigns in Kiangsi in the early 1930s, Chiang launched a "ch'ing hsiang" (clean-up-the-village) movement by periodically sending officials to the pao and chia to register and check the residents of every household. Anyone found to be a nonresident would be a Communist suspect. This did not succeed, a KMT handbook on Communist suppression admitted, because the census officials could not check every chia and pao simultaneously, and the Communists could move just ahead of the officials. Later, the responsibility for keeping tab on Communists was shifted to the chiefs of pao and chia, who were to report the presence of nonresidents. This again failed because these chiefs were so intimidated by Communist reprisals that they were reluctant to cooperate with the authorities. According to the KMT, the prerequisite for successful social control was to provide the people with maximum security by organizing an effective local militia. This was done with some degree of success in 1934.

#### External Support for the National Government

Soon after Chiang's break with the Soviets he found a new source of assistance. Dr. Max Bauer of Germany took the place of General Galen as Chiang's military adviser. Bauer, a former aide of Ludendorff, had served in advisory roles in Russia and Spain, and when appointed by Chiang brought 46 other Germans with him to China, thus beginning a decade of close Sino-German relations. As the revolution was ended in 1928, Bauer's job was mainly to help establish an intelligence system and improve military training. The most important and the best known German adviser to Chiang was General Hans von Seeckt, former Chief of the General Staff, who was first invited to China in 1933. On his first mission, he spent three months in China, at the end of which he submitted a memorandum to Chiang on army reorganization. He emphasized the building of a small army as a nucleus to be staffed by an elite officer corps. After a brief tour of duty by General Wetzell, von Seeckt returned in May 1934. Shortly thereafter, he was replaced by General Falkenhausen, who served until 1938.

That German influence was felt in the Chinese army cannot be doubted. Chinese soldiers began to wear German-style uniforms and to use German arms. A beginning was made in building an elite army of 12 divisions, which came to be known as the "central

army" and was controlled by Chiang. It seems certain, however, that the significance of German influence was confined to the following:

1. Training and advice given to the KMT army were an important factor in Chiang's defeat of southern Chinese rebellious generals in 1935. These German contributions were important in the war against the Communists only insofar as the Communists in the later campaigns turned to positional warfare.

2. A significant contribution by the Germans was the establishment of a KMT military organization emphasizing the centralization of command and independence from political control.

### Military Response to the Insurgents

Army building was slow until after 1937, when the exigencies of a national war compelled the KMT government to increase the army to more than 300 divisions (mostly of about 5,000 men each). These were poorly equipped and inadequately fed. In 1944, reforms were begun with US assistance; the division was brought up to 10,000 men equipped with a battalion of light artillery. By the end of the war, 39 divisions had been partially trained and equipped by the United States, although only the New First and New Sixth Armies were battle experienced.

Although it played a limited role in the civil war, the navy had considerable power compared to Communist naval capabilities. It had a light cruiser, the Chungking (a British gift, formerly HMS Aurora), and 131 landing craft in 1945. The air force was the pride of the KMT government. It was born in 1931 when the air force academy near Hangchow was founded with Italian assistance. In 1936, some US planes were added; after 1938 Russian craft were received. The air force grew tremendously after 1941, with American General Claire L. Chennault the principal guiding force. In addition to Chennault's American Volunteer Group (the "Flying Tigers"), a Sino-American Composite Wing was created as part of Chennault's Fourteenth Air Force in 1943, with American P-40s, B-25s, and C-47s. Late in the war, the Chinese Air Force boasted five fighter groups, two medium bomber groups, one heavy bomber group, and two transport groups, totalling 500 planes. It had monopoly of the air during the civil war in the 1940s.

Faced with the Communist insurgency after 1927, and under the circumstances described in the preceding pages, the KMT government chose what it believed to be the easiest way out--

military suppression. From 1927 to 1930, minor expeditions--usually by local troops--were sent against the Communist strongholds in Hunan and Kiangsi without appreciable results. From December 1930 to September 1931, the government conducted three "bandit suppression" campaigns in Kiangsi. The relative strength of the two sides was unquestionably in favor of the government. The Communists evaded stronger government forces and concentrated all their troops against smaller Nanking units. None of the campaigns was conclusive. Beginning with the third campaign of June 1931, Chiang sent in his "personal" armies totalling 300,000 men under his trusted generals. When the Communists were hemmed in near the Fukien-Kiangsi border, they eluded the government encirclement by persuading two government brigades to defect. In this campaign the Communists captured 10,000 rifles. After a brief interruption caused by Japan's invasion of Manchuria, the campaign resumed in mid-1932. This time, Chiang turned first to the Soviet areas on the periphery of the main Communist base. All districts near the Soviet areas were ordered to form local militia (min t'uan). Chiang himself organized a Special Work Force composed of selected young army officers whose duties were to round up strayed Communists, investigate transients, supervise the army postal service, and generally help enforce an economic blockade of the Communist areas. This blockade was quite effective. The Communists were hit hard by the shortage of cloth and salt. It was such a campaign that dislodged Chang Kuo-tao and his army from the Hupei-Honan-Anhwei Soviet area. In the fifth campaign, which followed almost immediately, against the central Soviet area, Chiang added new tactics. A Handbook on Bandit Suppression referred to the following:

1. Combat effectiveness was heightened by enforcing the system of joint responsibility: if a squad withdrew against orders, the squad leader would be executed; if a platoon withdrew against orders, the platoon commander would be executed, and so forth.

2. Methods used included the following:

- a. Roads, fortifications, and pillboxes were to be built around the Communist areas;

- b. In advancing along narrow trails and mountain passes, the vanguard must be strong;

- c. Preparations in breadth and depth: in movements, use units of 2,000 men; not more than 30 miles should separate different units; have ample reserves.

d. Ambush: it is not easy to ambush the Communists in their own areas, but be alert for their ambushes; in non-Communist areas, ambush should be used more often.

e. To fight guerrilla war: use nonuniformed personnel to spy on the Communists; move quickly; maintain secrecy and agility; march at night and attack at dawn. Do not fire freely, make every bullet count; take cover when the enemy cannot be seen or reached; be patient and wait for opportunities; be able to exist on little.

### 3. Tactics:

a. The main objective is to annihilate the enemy. Maintain discipline in order to win popular support; maintain the initiative.

b. In the march, keep supplies in the middle of the column.

c. When attacking, pick the enemy's weak points; pay attention to the flanks. It is rebel tactics to attack at one point, and then use large forces to intercept our reinforcements.

d. Relentless pursuit.

e. Defend points rather than a line.

f. When occupying an area, organize teams to round up Communists; use one-third of our force for defense; use two-thirds as guerrillas to clean up the area. Send regular army officers to organize and lead local militia; infiltrate rebel areas and forces with officers in disguise.

The handbook went on to say why the earlier campaigns had failed. The main reason, it explained, was that the army had failed to catch the enemy. The Communists could split into groups of three or five and scatter far and wide. The regular army could not afford to break itself up into small groups to follow the enemy, since the very idea of an army is to fight together as a unit. Even a cooperative populace could not report on the scattered rebels. Therefore, the breaking up of the enemy meant the failure of the army. The handbook further said that the militia had even greater disadvantages in that it was for the most part stationary and could not pursue or parry. Besides, militia training was inadequate and the militia was often easy prey for Communist propaganda. Thus, encircling the enemy and preventing his dispersal was essential.

The fifth campaign lasted a whole year. Eventually the Communists were forced to break out of the tightening encirclement and start on the celebrated "Long March" to Yen-an. The march covered about 6,000 miles through south and southwest China and some very forbidding terrain in Szechwan and Sikang. Sometimes the Communists were without food for days. Thousands collapsed. Many more deserted. Starting with 90,000 men, Mao reached Shensi in late 1935 with only 7,000 men, and together with the Communists already there (under Kao Kang and Liu Chih-tan), the total Communist force was less than 30,000 men.

The failure of the government to annihilate the Communists in the Kiangsi campaigns and during the Long March may be attributed to the following reasons:

1. The Communists evaded government pursuit by marching almost exclusively at night.
2. The Communists chose a route of march through territory that lay between the domains of two or more local war lords, or through the territories of those the Communists knew would not fight on Chiang's behalf.

By 1936, the Communists had established a new base area, with Yen-an as the new capital. This area, like the Kiangsi base, is located in an infertile loess-covered region, which in the case of Yen-an lies within the northern bend of the Yellow River. To the east was Yen Hsi-shan's domain, Shansi. To the west was General Ma Hung-kuei's Ninghsia Province. Neither would fight if the Communists left them alone. To the north was the dessicated area extending into Mongolia, and here was an escape route should the Communists find it necessary to vacate Yen-an. Only in the south did the Communists have any worry, for Chang Hsueh-liang had just been appointed by Chiang Kai-shek as deputy commander in chief of bandit suppression in the northwest. The "Young Marshal" was in command of the huge Manchurian army that had withdrawn from the northeast in the face of Japanese invasion. As has been mentioned, the Communists, by using political means, succeeded in neutralizing this army and turning Chang himself against Chiang.

As a result of the rapprochement in 1937, the Communists were legitimized, and in the name of fighting against Japan, they moved into Japanese-occupied territory. In the first two years of the war against Japan, the Communists did fight the Japanese, but even the Communists themselves admitted--and Mao himself so directed his lieutenants--that they fought in order to strengthen their forces. They established their own regimes in their "liberated"

areas, captured Japanese arms in small engagements, and fought KMT troops if they were in the way.<sup>8</sup> The KMT government at first was kept busy moving the government and industries to the interior and neglected guerrilla warfare against the Japanese until 1938. When it began to send guerrilla units into the Japanese rear after that year, a confrontation with Communists was inevitable. Therefore, skirmishes between the two were reported with increasing frequency. By occupying more and more territory and by organizing armed units wherever they went, the Communists increased their armed strength yearly until 1945, when they claimed to have a total force of 1.3 million regulars.

At the end of the war in 1945, civil war loomed on the horizon. The government was faced with many problems: a people tired after eight years of war, an economy that was badly dislocated, a political and party machine that was demoralized; an intelligentsia seething with discontent. When negotiations broke down and civil war was renewed in mid-1946, all these problems were aggravated. The Communists infiltrated into Manchuria, waged a war of movement during the first year of the war, launched limited offensives in the second during which they captured Manchuria and drove to Peking and Tientsin, and finally launched a general offensive in the third year. Chiang Kai-shek himself stepped down from the presidency in early 1949 in the hope of negotiating a settlement. But without him the crack troops of the government disintegrated. The Communists swept across the Yangtse at Nanking in April 1949. Outflanked, a big army in central China under Pai Chung-hsi retreated south. The governors defected one after another; cities surrendered without a fight; many political parties switched their support to the Communists. The Communists achieved victory two years sooner than they had expected.

#### Political Response--Attempts to Isolate the Communists

After the Long March, the government belatedly shifted its emphasis from military action to political programs designed to deprive the Communists of their seeming monopoly of such virtues as democracy, economic construction, and patriotism. In early October 1938, the KMT called an emergency meeting in Hankow. Among other things, the meeting decided to widen participation in the government by instituting a People's Political Council, which opened in Chungking in July of the following year with representatives from all political parties and independent groups. Far from a popular assembly, it nevertheless was an important step toward establishment of a link between society and government.



The KMT also promised an early termination of its one-party rule through inauguration of a constitutional government. Because of the war, this was postponed until 1946.

At the end of the war, with the help of the United States, the KMT agreed to call a Political Consultation Conference in Chungking to be attended by all political groups. The conference was to discuss problems of peace and national unification, thus showing the country its willingness to solve outstanding problems by peaceful means. It was hoped that guilt for obstruction would thus be placed on the Communists.

In the end, all these measures failed to achieve the intended results because they came too late and because of the pressures exerted by ultraconservatives in the party. It should be remembered too that the Communist strategy of the United Front contributed to the government's gradual isolation.

### CONCLUSIONS

1. The Communists came to power after an insurgency of 20 years. Though it was often interrupted by periods of nonviolence, the insurgency was regarded by the Communists as a continuing process. The Communists, in the process, perfected their military, political, and psychological weapons. These were sometimes used simultaneously, depending upon the circumstances.

2. The KMT erroneously viewed the insurgency as a purely military problem. Even when the Communists were isolated physically, as in Kiangsi, they survived by capitalizing on social and economic problems facing the government.

3. The KMT government was always faced with too many problems at one time. And it made the mistake of tackling all of them simultaneously with divided attention.

4. The KMT government's efforts to isolate the guerrillas from sources of support were few, generally ineffective, and almost entirely limited to military action. The government was able, by encirclement, to cut off the Communists' means of supply for their Chingkangshan base in the late 1920s and force Mao to make sorties for capturing supplies. Toward the end of the suppression campaign, in 1934, the government urged encirclement of guerrillas as a military tactic to prevent their dispersal and disappearance into the countryside. Some unsuccessful efforts to separate guerrillas from the local population in Kiangsi through

use of the pao-chia system were made in the early 1930s. In general, however, the government did not think in terms of isolating the guerrilla.

5. The KMT by and large failed to identify itself with the majority of the people and found itself fighting against more and more enemies and against more and more popular issues. Instead of isolating the insurgents, it was isolated by them physically, politically, and morally.

## Footnotes

1. The delegate of the Communist International was present at this meeting. Meanwhile, all foreign Communists who had been attached to the KMT were dismissed and sent home by Chiang, including Borodin and General Galen. Chiang's government severed all relations with the Soviet Union until the early 1930s.

2. Although there were some 60 minor nationalities in China, this concern for the ethnic groups was clearly for propaganda purposes, as these minorities mainly inhabited the border areas in the southwest and west. According to the Communists, the Lolos on the Tibetan borders aided the Communists during the "Long March." This early nationalities policy was probably an imitation of that of the Soviet party. Be it noted that after 1949, self-determination was replaced by mere autonomy because, according to the Communists, there was no longer any need for self-determination in the new society where there was no exploitation of one group by another.

3. When the New Fourth was operating against the Japanese in 1940, in the Shanghai-Nanking area, which the KMT was loath to abandon to the Communists, Chungking ordered redeployment of the New Fourth to northern Kiangsu and southern Shantung. Government units attacked the New Fourth in southern Anhwei on grounds that it had disobeyed orders. Several thousand Communists were killed including the deputy commander. After this incident, skirmishes between the two sides took place and increased in intensity through the remainder of the war, interrupted by abortive negotiations, sometimes under US auspices.

4. A. Pennington et al., The Psychology of Military Leadership (New York, 1943), p. 248.

5. General Mark Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu (New York, 1954), p. 88.

6. Marshall's subsequent withdrawal of American aid from the Nationalists (July 1946) unquestionably indirectly aided the Communists and was perhaps the single most decisive psychological event of the civil war.

7. Chien Tuan-sheng, The Government and Politics of China (Harvard University Press, 1950), ch. 8.

8. The Communists used the strategy and tactics described earlier. It would be redundant to discuss their role in the war against Japan. There is little information on their activities, and even Japanese army and navy archives largely ignored them. It is therefore reasonable to assume that they devoted much of their effort, and support received from the United States, to preparing for the subsequent civil war.

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## Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgent

Efforts in Greece, 1941-1949

by

Gunther E. Rothenberg

### WORLD WAR II

Like Yugoslavia and Albania, Greece provided an excellent setting for guerrilla warfare during World War II. Rugged terrain, a national tradition of guerrilla fighting, and a fierce hatred of foreign invaders greatly strengthened the Greek insurgents. The situation met Clausewitz's other requirements for successful guerrilla operations: the war was carried on in the interior of the country; the war did not hinge on a single battle; and the extent of the theater allowed the guerrillas scope for evasion and regroupment.

### Topography of Greece

Mountains cover some two-thirds of the Greek mainland and are the home of over 40% of a population of some 7,000,000. The remainder of the population is concentrated in cities, with about 1,000,000 living in the Athens-Piraeus area. There are no large towns in the mountain areas, but the land supports small villages.

The Pindus range, extending from the Albanian frontier southward to the Gulf of Corinth, forms the central core and largest area of sparse population. The next massif is the Mount Olympus region, a semicircular arc running up the eastern coast of Greece to Salonica. The third major mountain area is the Rhodope range in Macedonia, with access to Bulgaria. The mountains offer good terrain for guerrilla operations and do not lend themselves to

compartmentalization. By contrast, southern Greece, the Peloponnesus peninsula, could easily be compartmentalized, had no international frontier, and maritime traffic could be controlled with a relatively limited patrol force.

Interior communications in Greece were primitive. Railroads existed north to the major cities and to international lines. There were few railroads in the interior. The road network was equally primitive and became heavily damaged by war, resistance, and civil war.

The climate of Greece has certain extremes, especially in the mountain areas, which make maintenance of guerrilla bands difficult, especially in the winter. Greece is also a food-deficit area, which complicates the guerrilla's supply problem. These drawbacks were counterbalanced during the civil war by proximity and easy access to international frontiers offering support and sanctuary.

In balance, in its topography and general physical geography, Greece is a good, though by no means ideal, country for guerrilla warfare.

#### Local Support for the Guerrillas

#### Classes and Areas Involved

With a relatively homogeneous population and a collaborationist government, Greece did not pose as difficult a problem for its occupiers during World War II as did Yugoslavia. The average German had some respect for the culture of ancient Hellas and was better disposed toward the Greeks than toward the Yugoslavs, whom he regarded as Slavic barbarians. Then, too, the economic situation in Greece, unable to raise enough food to sustain its population even in peacetime, did much to keep Greece quiet under the control of the occupation forces and the puppet regime.

After Greece was overrun in 1941, it was occupied by troops of three powers. The greater part of the country was held by the Italians; the Germans occupied Crete and the Evros province on the Greek-Turkish border. They also had garrisons in Salonica and Athens. The Bulgarians held Eastern Thrace and Macedonia. Although the Greeks disliked all three occupiers, probably the Bulgarians the most, the resistance movement flagged. The defeat of the Greek army had also been the defeat of the Metaxas royalist dictatorship, which had had many enemies. This feeling the

Axis powers were at first able to use to their advantage. However, the Germans exploited the country's few resources and made but few provisions to feed the conquered. As a result there was famine in Athens and the surrounding area during the winter of 1941-1942. The starvation of that winter created bitter hatred against the occupiers, especially in the towns.

Unlike the Yugoslav guerrillas, the Greek guerrilla forces undertook no important operations in 1941, but spent the year recruiting personnel and leaders of enough stature to command respect and win support of the population.

The organization best fitted for active resistance was the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Like other Communist parties it had opposed the "imperialist" war until the invasion of Russia. Then it began to organize a Popular Front to oppose the Axis. In September 1941 the National Liberation Front (EAM) was established. It included the usual Popular Front program of national independence, democratic liberties, and resistance to the enemy. Included in the front were three Communist-controlled groups as well as two socialist and agrarian parties. As for individuals, the EAM numbered in its ranks 6 bishops, several hundred priests, virtually all labor leaders, 30 university professors, and large numbers of ordinary citizens. Estimates of total membership range from 500,000 to 2,000,000 members. Whichever estimate is accepted, EAM was a major force in a country of 7,000,000.

EAM put forth a program of civil and armed resistance--strikes, sabotage, noncooperation, and guerrilla war. The last was an old Greek tradition. During 1942 armed bands, provided with arms hidden when the army had surrendered, came into being in central Greece, and in December 1942 ELAS, the EAM's military arm, was established. From the outset ELAS differed from other Greek resistance groups in that it was definitely subordinated to the parent political organization. It was and remained the largest of the guerrilla groups, comprising nearly 30,000 men.

Other Greek guerrilla groups each functioned loosely around a military leader. A socialist group, allied to ELAS but not Communist controlled, was known as EKKA. It was led by a Colonel Psarros and operated in central Greece. The guerrilla group adhering to the royal government in exile and most favored by the British was led by a Colonel Zervas and was known as EDES. EDES received considerable British aid and at times cooperated surreptitiously with the Germans and Italians against ELAS. Nonetheless Zervas was never able to match EAM and its ELAS forces in popular backing and military strength. He was confined to a small area in the Epirus and never had more than 8,000 men.

EAM and ELAS thus became the mainstay of Greek resistance. Although, like the partisan movement, they were committed to a national rather than a purely Communist program, they nonetheless were under Communist leadership. The Communist Party provided most of the cadre for EAM leaders and had much experience, acquired during the Metaxas dictatorship, in underground organization. Although actual command of the military branch, ELAS, was vested in a non-Communist regular army officer, Colonel Stephanos Saraphis, ELAS was always closely controlled by the political EAM organization. When active operations started, ELAS was strongest in central and northern Greece, and it soon gained control of the mountainous Pindus and Olympus areas.

### The Guerrilla Organization

Authority in ELAS extended from company through division, which also acted as area command, to ELAS headquarters, which was comparable to army headquarters. At each level of command there was a military commander, a political representative, and a kapetanios. This last official was responsible for supply and morale, the military commander for the conduct of operations, while the political representative was the real chief of the whole force. Nationally, ELAS was clearly subordinated to EAM, whose Central Committee exercised full executive control over the military branch. EAM was highly organized. The village was the base. Village committees, usually Communist directed, elected district committees, and those in turn elected regional committees. From the regional committees a Central Committee of 25 delegates was chosen. The method of election further buttressed Communist leadership. In the spring of 1944, when EAM controlled about half of the country, elections were held for a National Council to provide even wider popular support.

### Nature of Support

From the outset ELAS had a surplus of manpower and a shortage of arms. While the Communist bands committed a number of atrocities which alienated support, ELAS still profited from its National Front propaganda, as well as from a genuine reluctance of all classes to return to prewar conditions. Many people feared a return of the old regime and joined ELAS. It is significant that many students and young teachers were among the second-rank ELAS leaders.

Originally the armed groups had been equipped from arms and munitions hidden when the Greek army had capitulated. Some weapons

had been flown in, but not until the Italian capitulation in 1943 did ELAS obtain enough arms to equip battalion-size units.

Sustenance and other nonmilitary supplies were obtained from EAM. The commissariat branch, ETA (Epimelets tou Andarte) collected taxes throughout Greece. The levy was based on the principle of no taxation on a specified minimum quantity necessary for sustenance and progressive taxation on the remainder. About 20% of the proceeds went to general EAM uses, the remainder into ELAS depots. Thus ELAS, after the initial phase, did not have to resort to unorganized and indiscriminate requisitioning which would have antagonized the peasants.

#### Relation of Support to Events

As indicated above, guerrilla bands were operating in the fall of 1941, but not until after the disastrous famine of that winter did they receive large-scale popular support. After that winter the Greeks felt very bitter about the continued German and Italian exploitation of their country and the general misery contributed most powerfully to the support of the guerrilla movement.

Support of the guerrilla movement was relatively steady and did not fluctuate even when the differences between EDES and ELAS became more bitter. Then, too, the British missions tried their best to bring about a measure of cooperation among the guerrillas. In the summer of 1943, when the British were eager to tie up a maximum number of Axis troops in order to ease opposition to the Sicily landing, general agreement, albeit short-lived, was reached between all groups. This broke down after September 1943, when ELAS, having received heavy equipment from the capitulated Italian forces, proved less and less amenable to British control and direction. The British now increased their aid to Zervas, the EDES leader, and a civil war between ELAS and EDES followed.

During this first Greek civil war, October 1943 to February 1944, ELAS saw itself challenged in its plan for postwar domination and suppressed opposition unhesitatingly, and often very cruelly. This led to some decline in popular support, but did not greatly affect the outcome.

By 1944 the Germans merely tried to maintain control of the larger towns and transportation routes, and in mid-summer of 1944, due to the Russian breakthrough into the Balkans, the Germans began to evacuate their forces, generally leaving ELAS in control of the freed areas. Only in the Epirus did EDES maintain a small

enclave. With the German evacuation the guerrilla campaign came to an end.

### Outside Support for Guerrillas

#### Sources of Outside Support

Greece was considered within the main British sphere of influence, and support for the guerrilla movement was furnished by Great Britain. In addition, the Greek government in exile, established in Cairo, provided a certain amount of support, exclusively to EDES. It is perhaps noteworthy that the exile government was able to draw on the resources of the Greek community in the Levant, many of whom had retained Greek citizenship and thus provided a tax and manpower basis.

#### British Relations with the Guerrillas

In the autumn of 1942 a party of British liaison personnel was dropped in Greece and made contact with the incipient ELAS and EDES groups. The British were in favor of a combined effort and in November 1942 persuaded both groups to cooperate in attacking an important bridge over the Gorgopotamos River. This was an isolated effort, however, and within a few months the Greek resistance movement divided along political lines.

The commander of the British mission during the first year was Brigadier E. Myers, succeeded during the second and final year by Colonel C.M. Woodhouse. Both officers, as well as the government they represented, favored EDES over ELAS. In part this was for purely military reasons, because from the early spring of 1944 on ELAS became less and less concerned with fighting the Germans and more and more concerned with eliminating their political rivals. On the other hand EDES, the minority group, could not hope to play any postwar role without British help and so was eager to gain British gratitude.

Behind these military reasons for friction lay deeper political reasons. The Communists hated Great Britain as the greatest imperial power. In turn, while individual British soldiers and officers might get on well with individual Communists, the British government could not favor the establishment of a Communist, Russian-influenced government in the eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, Britain had obligations to King George II of Greece.

The king had decided to continue the war on Britain's side after the Germans had intervened and after many Greek conservatives had wished to surrender. The British government, and Mr. Churchill in particular, felt honor bound to see the king returned to Greece after the war. Opinion in Greece and among the Greeks of the Levant, however, strongly favored a republic and even some EDES leaders were not convinced of the wisdom of forcing the monarchy on a reluctant people. The British nonetheless continued support of the royalists and EDES, and when, after September 1943, EAM-ELAS seemed to gain the upper hand, the British increased their supplies to EDES. Even so, the British government was undecided quite how far to go, and there was divided opinion among Conservatives and Labor. In the end, the British missions negotiated in February 1944 the Plakas Agreement, which ended the civil war and allocated territorial zones to each side. But by this time ELAS was implacably opposed to the British, setting the stage for the second Greek civil war. On the eve of German departure from Greece, the British introduced a regular Greek army combat team, the Greek Mountain Brigade, to strengthen EDES.

#### Forms of Support

Kinds of support were somewhat more limited than those rendered to the partisans in Yugoslavia. British personnel in Greece never exceeded 100 of all ranks. They included liaison and signal personnel who were in contact with British Middle East Headquarters (Cairo) and arranged for drops of light arms, explosives, and other combat materials. The British arranged for the evacuation of certain key individuals and also reintroduced trained personnel, especially explosives experts, into Greece. The British also provided facilities for the various Greek groups to keep contact with the Greek exile government, to try to thrash out the political problems.

In the Greek islands the British operated a number of commando groups, called the Special Boat Service, which cooperated on occasion with Greek guerrillas, mainly ELAS. Despite the political friction, individual relations between the British and the Greeks were far better than between the British and the Yugoslav partisans. This may well be an important consideration in operations of this kind.



## The Counterinsurgent Response

### Attempts to Cut Local Support

The Germans reacted to guerrilla attacks along the same pattern as in Yugoslavia. At first the attacks were considered as a police problem and were met with a search, attack, and reprisal policing. Reprisals against villages suspected of guerrilla activity were heavy, while in their zone of occupation, the Bulgarians expelled large numbers of Greek civilians. The results were on the whole entirely counterproductive and by early 1943 there was, in part due to British stimulation, a considerable increase in guerrilla activity.

More important and useful was the arrival of first-rate troops, the First Mountain Division (German) in April 1943. This force soon gained a decisive victory over a major EDES group and from that time on EDES ceased all active operations against the Germans. The ELAS, however, proved much tougher. This was especially true after the surrender of Italy. Several major Italian units, the Pinerolo Division and the Aosta Cavalry Regiment, went over to ELAS. However, when the Italians proved unwilling to carry out certain operations they were disarmed, though individuals joined the guerrillas.

In any case, the defection of the Italians left the Germans very thinly spread on the ground, and they therefore recruited three "security" battalions of Greeks (700 men each) to fight ELAS. The quisling government of Rallis, premier since April 1943, concentrated its efforts on anti-Communist propaganda. Moreover the civilian part of EDES collaborated with the security battalions. Whether Colonel Zervas himself ever collaborated with the Germans remains uncertain.

The Greek collaborationist government and the Germans tried to whip up enthusiasm for the security battalions by propaganda about the Slavic-Communist danger. However, the activities of the Bulgarians in Thrace and Macedonia left very little scope for the anti-Slav argument, while the Communist danger did not appear serious to many Greeks desirous of a new postwar society. Indeed, the Bulgarian activities were blamed by the German commanders for the growing Greek guerrilla activities. The Bulgarians not only used extreme cruelty against guerrillas and suspected guerrillas, but they also armed Bulgarian minority groups in German-occupied Greece who in turn used these arms to persecute their Greek neighbors.

More helpful to the Germans was the popular support which the Greek security battalions received as a result of Communist

atrocities. By late 1943, however, the trend of the war was so evident that few Greeks ventured to enlist in these German-sponsored units. Finally, despite their intention of exploiting the Greek manpower potential, the German field commanders persisted in the mass execution of hostages, often in the ratio of 100 Greeks for every German killed. This policy also proved highly counterproductive. The German situation was further complicated by a steadily worsening economic situation, with hunger and destitution again widespread. As in the case of Yugoslavia, many Greeks, Communist or not, came to consider EAM-ELAS as the only chance for personal and national survival.

#### Attempts to Block Outside Support

After September 1943 the Allies held air superiority over the Greek islands and southern Greece, and German planners proposed to abandon the southern part of the Balkan peninsula. Hitler, however, would not permit this, and in fact German reinforcements were able to take over Rhodes, Cephalonia, and Leros from the defected Italians, who had been reinforced by British units. Recapture of the islands was deemed essential as a countermeasure to a feared major invasion, as well as a blow against seaborne reinforcements for the guerrillas.

However, with one major exception, no major seaborne reinforcements came to the guerrillas. The exception was when EDES in July 1944 abruptly reopened hostilities against the occupation forces and seized some six and one-half miles of coastline in the Epirus. This allowed the British to land some 4,000 royalist troops who had been trained in Egypt and who represented a considerable increase in the EDES fighting strength. The operation, however, was really a move to strengthen EDES in the coming war with ELAS.

Except for German attempts to recapture the islands, largely successful in September 1943, and for routine naval and air patrols, which increasingly were challenged by growing Allied air and sea superiority, the Germans undertook no major operations to prevent the guerrillas from obtaining outside aid. And when finally in the fall of 1944 Bulgaria and Rumania entered the war against Germany, the guerrillas obtained large quantities of arms direct. By this time the British had landed in the Piraeus and the second civil war was soon to begin.

## CIVIL WAR, 1944-1949

### Historical Sketch

#### The First Round, September 1944-February 1945

As early as 1943, the British government contemplated the use of British troops to prevent an EAM take-over after the war. As the war neared an end, the British made efforts to create a government of "National Unity," in which the KKE would participate. In September 1944 Britain signed an agreement with this government (the Caserta Agreement) in which ELAS as well as EDES were placed under the joint control of the Greek government and the British military authorities. Finally, on October 9, 1944, Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Stalin worked out a "spheres of influence" agreement on the Balkans which left Greece in the British sphere of influence.<sup>1</sup>

The Germans began to evacuate Greece in September 1944 and on October 17, the Greek government, headed by its middle-of-the-road premier, George Papandreou, returned to Athens. In addition, British troops under Maj. Gen. Sir Ronald M. Scobie, consisting of a paratroop brigade, an armored brigade, a number of commando units, and a Spitfire squadron, were sent to Greece.

On arrival, the Greek royalist government attempted to disarm the resistance forces. This led to a dispute involving between 40,000 to 50,000 men in ELAS, some 10,000 to 15,000 in EDES, as well as the regular royalist troops of the Greek army. After considerable discussion, negotiations deadlocked. General Scobie now intervened and late in November ordered both EDES and ELAS to disarm. On December 1 he issued an order for the disbandment of all guerrilla forces by December 10. EAM decided to resist this move and fighting broke out on December 3. The suppression of the insurrection fell mainly upon British troops and two additional divisions had to be diverted from Italy before ELAS was put down. Athens and its environs were precariously secured, but the British and Greek royalist forces were unable to secure the rest of the country, and a solution was found only when Mr. Churchill flew to Athens in person to arrange for a political solution. The return of King George II was deferred and a regency under Archbishop Damaskinos was installed. Damaskinos appointed the republican General Plastiras as Premier. These changes paved the way for the Varkiza Peace Treaty of February 12, 1945.

The principal provisions were that ELAS should surrender a specified amount of arms (41,500 rifles and a proportionate number of other weapons) to British officers; KKE and EAM were to be recognized as legal parties; elections and a plebiscite on the question of the monarchy were to be held within the year. Prosecution of those implicated in the uprising was to be confined to violations of criminal law (there had been executions of several hundred people by both sides) and the army, police, and bureaucracy were to be purged of those who had collaborated with the Germans.

Thus ended the first round of the Greek civil war. After 33 days of fighting with 11,000 persons killed, Churchill had secured Britain's position in Greece, and Greece was to be on the side of the West during the Cold War.

#### The Second Round, 1945-1947

Between the first and the second rounds of the civil war various interim governments strove ineffectually to reduce the chaos, political as well as economic, into which war, occupation, resistance, and civil war had plunged the country. But a stable political solution could not be found. The striking fact of the Greek political scene after liberation was the lack of anything that could be called a center. There were many people who disliked both the intolerance of the left and the reaction of the right, but they had neither organization nor a program. Soon it became evident that the KKE had no real intention of abiding by the Varkiza agreement, and the right, taking its revenge for war and civil war sufferings, also violated its terms. In the country districts a white terror supplanted the violence of the left, and even in Athens, where conditions of law and order prevailed more or less, extreme rightists of the "X" organization committed murders in working class districts.<sup>2</sup>

By the summer of 1945 public order was breaking down. In southern Greece rightist bands continued to harass leftists, while in northern Greece leftist bands remained in the area of Mount Olympus and in northern Macedonia. In the elections of March 1946, the royalists obtained a slight majority, and in September a plebiscite, albeit not without intimidation at the polls, returned George II. Even before the restoration of the monarchy there had been a marked acceleration of Communist-led guerrilla activity. After the royalist election victory, the KKE increased its efforts to establish additional bands, hoping to reestablish a guerrilla force such as ELAS had been. Most alarming to the government, there was evidence that some of the

bands received support from Yugoslavia. Strong measures were taken. Special gendarme detachments, equipped with automatic arms and under orders to take no prisoners, began to operate in July 1945 and met with temporary success. By September, however, the scale of leftist band activity, now openly under KKE auspices, had increased again. Units of the reconstituted Greek National Army (GNA) were called into action. British troops, although they remained in Greece, took no part in these operations.

During 1947 the guerrillas conducted small-scale operations, concentrating on recruiting and organization. By the end of the year Communist-led guerrillas in Greece approximated 23,000 armed troops, some 20% women, with about 8,000 replacements training in neighboring Soviet satellite countries--Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania. Great Britain provided considerable support and equipment, as well as military missions, to the GNA, while a police mission, largely drawn from the Royal Ulster Constabulary, attempted to form a new national police force.

The tactics of the GNA were at first inefficient. Although the Peloponnese was cleared during 1947, in central and northern Greece the GNA adopted a defensive attitude, holding towns, villages, and strongpoints, but leaving the countryside at the mercy of the enemy.

At this point Great Britain, in one of its periodic postwar economic crises, declared that it could no longer bear the economic burden. The United States then assumed the main burden of the fight (Truman Doctrine, March 1947), and to provide coordinated operational and logistic support and direction to the Greek Armed Forces, a Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group (JUSMAPG) was established in December 1947. At the same time, the guerrillas declared the establishment of a Provisional Democratic Government in the mountains.

#### The Final Phase, 1948-1949

General Papagos, later to assume overall command of government forces, called the results of the 1947 operations "disheartening." Though the progress of the bands had been checked, the threat was by no means ended. Indeed, in the winter of 1947-1948 the guerrillas reorganized their forces, received increased supplies from neighboring countries, and prepared to meet new attacks by the GNA.

The number of guerrillas at this point still remained at about 23,000, with 8,000 additional men in transborder training and rest

camps. Against this the government mustered, exclusive of police, gendarmery, and home guards, some 182,000 troops, supported by two fighter squadrons.

The low ratio of government troops to guerrillas revealed the seriousness of the problem, but actually the final result was never in doubt from 1948 on. Despite a record of poor and corrupt political administration and inept military tactics by the Greek government, the Communist insurrection was doomed by its failure to reach "critical" popular support, estimated as at least 20% fighters and some 40% sympathizers among the total population.<sup>3</sup> Political, social, and ethnographic factors limited the potential for popular support, and faulty tactics by the guerrillas, including terror and murder, further reduced their popular appeal. The Communist leaders also made major strategic mistakes. Given proper leadership and equipment, the Greek civil war could thus be dealt with almost by military means alone.

### Nature of the Guerrilla Movement

#### Guerrilla Organization

Political and Social Antecedents. The guerrilla movement during the 1945-1947 period differed in many ways from that of ELAS and EAM. Though EAM remained in existence as a legal party until 1947 it lost its broad spectrum of adherents. This was even more true of the guerrillas in the hills. In 1944 ELAS had the respect and help of a considerable number of supporters; the guerrillas of the postwar period, numbering perhaps 23,000 at their peak, had a very much smaller number of active supporters.

The core of the guerrilla leadership was supplied by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), which ordered some of its adherents to the hills in the spring of 1946. However, by this time bands of guerrillas were already in existence. These bands had come into being in part because of the extreme bitterness between the left and the right. Persecution drove many into the hills, as did extreme economic want.<sup>4</sup> Dislike of the many former collaborationists in postwar government ranks, as well as government action against all leftists, including some anti-Communists, provided additional recruits.<sup>5</sup> Close ties of kinship brought more members. Even so, despite the undoubted mishandling of the situation by the government, and despite the existence of genuine grievances, the guerrilla movement lacked a cause strong enough to win it wide popular support.<sup>6</sup>

Political and Military Structure. The guerrilla organization was dominated politically after 1945 by the KKE which, at least initially, enjoyed a fair degree of support.<sup>7</sup> However, in contrast with EAM, the KKE could not maintain this popular appeal, and after the Socialists and Liberals withdrew from EAM it no longer could pretend to be a united front of the entire Greek people.<sup>8</sup> Political direction was in the hands of the Central Executive Committee of KKE, in communication with the Cominform agencies.

In the field, political direction of the effort was undertaken by a Political Commissar, Nicolas Zachariades. The KKE made considerable efforts to build up in the areas it controlled permanently or temporarily what Bernard Fall has termed "parallel hierarchies," i.e., an apparatus supplanting the established governmental authorities. In this it had limited success. While in certain areas, especially in the northwestern mountain regions, there was support for the guerrillas<sup>9</sup> it never became general, and often the KKE had to resort to terror measures to intimidate the villagers.<sup>10</sup> At the end of 1947 the KKE made strenuous efforts to establish a "free Greek government in the mountains."

Failure to build up a wide popular base forced the Communist guerrillas into commando-type operations and until 1948 greatly limited the scope of their enterprises. After their initial defeat in early 1945, the guerrillas operated in lightly equipped and armed bands, 50-100 in strength, scattered throughout Greece. In the winter of 1946-1947 the various smaller units were gradually concentrated in larger bands, but not until the summer of 1947 did the guerrillas attempt to operate in battalion-size units.

During 1948-1949 the KKE leadership underwent considerable internal stress which showed in its overall strategy and conduct of operations. The KKE became involved in the Tito-Cominform struggle which erupted in 1947. Following negotiations between the Greek Communists, Tito, and other Communist leaders, the decision was taken to establish a "Provisional Democratic Government" in a "liberated" area of northern Greece. On December 23, 1947, the guerrillas announced through their radio station, located either in Albania or Yugoslavia, that such a government had been established, with Markos Vafiades as Premier and Minister of War. Markos had been chief political commissar of ELAS during World War II in Macedonia and was generally oriented toward Titoism. Within the movement Markos was checked by pro-Soviet elements led by Moscow-trained Zachariades. Despite Tito's expulsion from the Cominform in June 1948 Markos remained in control. Since Yugoslav support was vital for the Greek guerrilla



movement, Moscow prevailed in the end. In January 1949 Markos was relieved of his posts and succeeded by Yoannis Joannides and Zachariades. The shift in leadership also brought about a change in guerrilla strategy which is discussed below.

As a corollary to the attempt to establish a government, the guerrillas temporarily succeeded in converting their bands into regimental, brigade, and even understrength divisional establishments. Brigades numbered 600 to 800 men, divisions consisted of two or three brigades, and a corps of two or three divisions. During the winter of 1947-1948, the main guerrilla strength was concentrated in a heavily fortified area in the mountainous Grammos-Vitsi region near the Greek-Albanian-Yugoslav border. Small bands continued to operate throughout the country.

The guerrilla combat forces were aided by so-called self-defense units or cells (YIAFKAs) in the populated areas. These cells, in addition to gathering recruits and supplies, were mainly used to provide intelligence. At the end of 1947 such cells were estimated to have some 75,000 members,<sup>11</sup> a number which seems much too large.

Logistics. Personnel replacements were supplied from KKE volunteers, from persons driven into the underground by government reprisals, from the Slav-Macedonian ethnic minority groups along the northeastern border, and, significantly, by forced recruitment of villagers.

Weapons were at first available from stocks hidden in defiance of the Varkizas agreement. Although ELAS surrendered actually more than the stipulated quantity of arms, they were mainly of old types. Some of their best weapons were hidden. In addition, many weapons were seized from the police, from hastily organized village guards, and in similar ways. Replacement of weapons, reequipment with standardized types and heavier weapons, and above all replacement of ammunition, came largely from Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Moreover, from late 1945 on, these Communist satellites also provided training, medical, and other facilities.

Undoubtedly a good percentage of ammunition and weapons were obtained locally by the guerrillas, aided by the YIAFKAs. In addition, mule pack trains moving at night brought supplies from the frontier areas to the Greek interior. However, such operations were difficult because of the terrain, distance, and possible interception by the GNA and gendarmes and were most efficient in areas immediately adjacent to friendly frontiers.

The period from 1948 to the end of April 1949, when Tito began to close down his supply operations, saw an increased flow of supplies to the guerrillas from the neighboring Soviet satellites. In general, supplies were moved overland across the frontier areas held by the guerrillas; there were some seaborne supplies brought in from Albania. Mule trains moving by night carried small stores into the interior of the country.

The type of supplies also changed. During the first period they had largely consisted of small arms and ammunition, as well as some medical stores. Now heavy weapons--some field artillery, heavy machine guns, and mortars--as well as such engineering stores as mines and barbed wire, were delivered. The weapons came from captured German army stocks held by the satellite countries. Some weapons continued to be captured from the government forces. Late in 1948 there was an increase in more modern weapons, including arms of Soviet and Czech manufacture.

During 1948 the guerrillas changed their recruiting policy. They began to abandon attempts to force peasants into their ranks and used terror to intimidate the population into denying intelligence to the government forces. Recruits now were largely drawn from the ranks of the convinced Communists, mainly from the YIAFKAs. An especially fertile recruiting ground was the Slav-Macedonian ethnic minority group. The guerrilla "government" promised the establishment of a federated and independent Macedonia in the event of victory, and this promise had a certain appeal in this area, long the object of strife between Greece, Yugoslavia, and Albania. Thus, despite severe losses, the number of active guerrillas remained stable, about 23,000.

Doctrine, Training, and Indoctrination. The Communists conducted their propaganda with considerable skill. The main theme of Communist propaganda was that the government was one imposed by force on the people, that it was corrupt and brutal on occasion, and that only a "united front of all progressive elements" could reverse the trend toward monarcho-fascism. Excesses committed by the government forces tended to give point to this propaganda. During 1948 and 1949 there was less talk about a coalition with other "democratic" forces, and the Communist Party became more openly the primary agent in the guerrilla war. The antigovernment propaganda was never entirely effective or persuasive and the government was able to counter it with effective means.

There appears to have been little definite indoctrination among the guerrilla bands. The Andartes, the common name for

leftist guerrillas, either belonged to the hard-core KKE or had been driven into the hills by government or right-wing excesses. In this case they needed no additional indoctrination. If they were pressed peasants, they generally had to be kept in line by threats and deserted frequently.

Training varied considerably. Many of the Andartes were veterans of the resistance, others received rudimentary training in the hills and acquired experience during actual operations. From 1947 on, training schools existed in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania, and later training revealed a much higher standard, due in part to the experience of survival and in part to the training received in the transborder training centers. Specialists, especially in the handling of heavy weapons and communications equipment, showed considerable proficiency.

### Objectives of the Guerrillas

Political Objectives. The professed objective of the guerrillas was the restoration of "liberty and democracy in Greece." Their real maximum objective was the establishment of a Communist state in Greece. There is some evidence that they would have temporarily settled for less--a coalition government, banishment of the king, and a restoration of the KKE to legal status.<sup>12</sup> In the last phase (1948-1949), the aim to establish a Communist state was affirmed openly, with the promise of an autonomous Macedonian federation as a subsidiary aim.

Military and Geographic Objectives. During the fighting of December 1944-February 1945 the main military objectives of ELAS were to prevent disarmament and to maintain its predominant position within the country.

The early bands of 1945-1946 were largely motivated by a desire for self-preservation. On orders from the KKE, from May 1946 on the military goal was to demonstrate that the government could not maintain law and order and was unable to run the country.

After some successes, from 1947 on the aim became to liberate certain areas. Finally from 1948 on the aim was to maintain an area adjacent to the friendly frontier as liberated territory, including an urban center to use as a "capital." Greek sources claim that had this aim succeeded the guerrillas would have received recognition from the Communist countries, followed by open military aid.<sup>13</sup>

## Techniques

Military Action. During the fighting of December 1944-February 1945 ELAS made its first attempt at regular position warfare and failed against the superior firepower of a modern army. Even so, the paucity of British-Greek government resources prevented a clear government victory.

During the period January 1946 to December 1947 the guerrillas, in the main, operated along hit-and-run lines. Usually moving at night, they attacked their objectives while other detachments provided cover against the arrival of reinforcements. Following a successful attack the guerrillas blew up installations, ransacked stores and depots, and executed known enemies. Guerrilla attacks were usually backed up by sabotage squads operating against the lines of communication. The raids created a tremendous refugee problem, which was one of their aims. Some 700,000 people left smaller towns during the civil war and crowded into the larger, better-defended centers.

During the last phase (1948-1949), hit-and-run tactics continued, but defense of the base area near the frontier became increasingly important. The defended areas were held by an inner and outer ring of mutually supporting machine-gun nests, protected by mine fields. Artillery was often placed in such positions that counterbattery fire would be likely to fall into neighboring countries, something which the GNA, on the advice of the JUSMAPG, tried to avoid. In support of the defended area, guerrilla saboteur squads operated in the rear of GNA lines, mining roads and rail communications, destroying bridges, and harassing supply columns.

The guerrilla strategy changed after the ouster of Markos in January 1949. Markos had favored the retention of small-unit operations, while Zachariades believed that, despite the apparent success of the small-unit operations, time was working against the Communists and insisted on large-scale conventional actions. Early in 1949 the Communists launched a strong offensive against Florina, a town in northern Macedonia. This conventional attack, supported by artillery, led to their downfall. The GNA was able to rout them and by September the war was over. As Cyril Falls remarked, "Ambition led to their downfall. They certainly could have maintained the fight for longer on guerilla lines."<sup>14</sup> With the determined support given to the government by the United States, however, the guerrillas had no real chance of establishing a Communist regime.

Political Warfare. An important element in the success of the guerrilla tactics was their careful planning based on a sound intelligence network. The YIAFKA units, some 50 to 60 strong, provided not only the necessary intelligence, but also one of the most effective means of political warfare. Their presence, often even after an area had been nominally secured by the GNA, served to intimidate opponents of the guerrillas and provided the most substantial basis for the establishment of an alternate shadow government within a community. The hit-and-run raids had a political warfare aim--to show the Greek people that the government could not protect them from attack.

Terrorism. Terrorism was one of the weapons of the Andartes. It was used to intimidate the enemy, to convince the population of the impotence of the government, and to impress recruits into their ranks. The value of these methods, at least in Greece, was very dubious. Terror succeeds where the terrorists enjoy the support of the great mass of the population. In places where support is half-hearted or confined to a minority, the guerrillas are forced to dissipate their energies and to employ terror to keep their nominal supporters in line.

### Support for the Guerrillas

#### Local Support

Classes, Ethnic Groups, and Areas Involved. In the long run, the limited degree of popular support received by the guerrillas proved to be a major weakness. Indeed, in the opinion of some observers it proved to be decisive.<sup>15</sup> Estimates regarding the exact amount of popular support vary rather widely. One estimate gives the number of YIAFKAs at the end of 1947 at about 50,000 with some 750,000 sympathizers behind them.<sup>16</sup> On the other extreme is the contention that the guerrilla "infiltrating units had to hide from the population when they could not cow it."<sup>17</sup> The truth lies between the extremes but suggests that even considerable numbers of activists can eventually be eliminated by purely military means, if they do not enjoy the support of the population to an overwhelming degree. Greece thus becomes the model for the purely military solution. It must be stressed, however, that Greece was a special case. The absence of a "cause," the lack of a really burning issue, as well as a number of factors favorable to the government, enabled the counterinsurgency response to be almost entirely limited to military means.

The Greek Communist-led guerrillas did not have and failed to develop popular support of the degree required to sustain their operation, much less to gain momentum for a major revolutionary war.

In general the pattern of support varied regionally. By the end of 1944, ELAS undoubtedly had gained considerable support, but following the Varkiza Agreement a marked regional pattern developed. In the south, especially in the Peloponnese, the right gained almost unchallenged control. In central Greece the left remained much stronger. While many villages passed under right-wing control, the Communists retained some influence in the small towns. Northwest, in the Epirus, the nationalist followers of EDES dominated the region. Western and Central Macedonia, however, remained strongly influenced by the left and here the guerrillas found their main support. Eastern Macedonia, on the other hand, which had been occupied by the Bulgarians during the war, was extremely hostile to the Communists, who were regarded as allies of the hated Slavs. The only exception to the general hostility here was the Slav-Macedonian minority.

In the larger cities of Greece--Athens, Piraeus, Salonica, Patras, and Volos--the guerrillas could count to some degree on support that had its base in class distinctions. The urban proletariat tended to support the guerrilla movement, while merchants and small capitalists were solidly in the right-wing ranks. Intellectuals could be found on both sides. However, class distinctions and antagonism in Greece are less important than nationalism, and in the end the alignment, nolens volens, of the guerrilla with Greece's Slav neighbors led to a marked decrease in the level of support.

Nature of Support. Here again the evidence is contradictory. One observer flatly states that the guerrillas had little or no popular support after 1944,<sup>18</sup> while another observer noted substantial voluntary support by both the rural and the urban population.

Local support for guerrillas means above all food, shelter, intelligence, and the denial of such intelligence to the government forces. Secondary factors are recruitment of fighters and specialists. Smothers found that the guerrillas, in eastern Thessaly at least, found these necessities from the population and obtained them without undue terror. "As for food," one guerrilla leader maintained, "our main source is the peasants who supply it willingly."<sup>19</sup> In addition, food and other supplies were smuggled out of towns, and even from Greek army dumps. This latter

contention is supported by General Papagos, Commander in Chief of the GNA from late 1948 on, who claims that communism had considerable support within the population, the administration, and even the army.<sup>20</sup> Apparently the guerrillas did enjoy support, but not so much as to convert the movement into a true revolutionary war. In any case there was not enough to sustain it once events had turned against the guerrillas.

Relation of Support to Events. The above contention is borne out by the marked decline in support experienced by the guerrillas after reverses. There was a striking loss of popular support following the defeat of ELAS in 1944-1945,<sup>21</sup> and in fact whenever the government secured an area and maintained law and order, it was able to rally the great mass of the population. In this connection it is worth noting that the early excesses of the right-wing volunteer bands and National Guard units during the period 1945-1947 did much to swing support to the guerrillas. The better discipline and control of regular troops solved this problem.

#### Outside Support

Supporting Nations and Their Relations with the Guerrillas. During the Greek civil war the Communist-led guerrillas received various types of support, both direct and indirect. Direct support was provided by the then Russian satellites Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania; indirect support by the Soviet Union and various other states of the Soviet bloc.

Relations between Russia and the Andartes were initially strained by the Russian refusal to back ELAS in 1944. After 1945, however, party discipline prevailed within the KKE, until the Titoist-Stalinist issue split the party.

The relationship between the Slavic states supporting the guerrillas and the recipients of the aid was compromised by the territorial claims of these countries on Greece. Bulgaria demanded a slice of eastern Macedonia and an outlet to the Aegean; Albania and Greece disputed a portion of the Epirus, and Yugoslavia claimed western Macedonia and indeed during 1945 supported autonomous Slav bands in that area. The claims proved an acute embarrassment to the KKE. Indeed, many Greek Communists strongly objected to any cession of Greek territory.<sup>22</sup> To avoid a debacle Zachariades met with Yugoslav and Bulgarian party leaders in January 1946. Although the ultimate disposition of Macedonia was apparently not decided, the question was definitely played down. Instructions



were given to the local Slav bands to cooperate with the Andartes and to deter any propaganda concerning the political future of the area until victory had been achieved.

The question of Macedonia, however, became one of the main factors leading to Tito's breach with the Kremlin. Tito aspired to form a South-Slav federation consisting of the six Yugoslav republics, Bulgaria, and Macedonia. In this setup Tito would have been dominant and would have been able to withstand Russian interference even better. These plans, as well as other Yugoslav assertions of national independence, were ill-received in Moscow.

The fermentations in the Communist camp had repercussions on guerrilla warfare in Greece. The Tito-oriented group under Markos was willing to cede northern Macedonia to the proposed federal structure, but Moscow's opposition prevented any action. Then, following the expulsion of Tito from the Cominform in June 1948, the Greek guerrilla government was reconstructed in January 1949. The new guerrilla government proclaimed in favor of an autonomous Macedonia, to include Yugoslav Macedonia, under Bulgarian sponsorship. Meanwhile Moscow could not make up its mind. To endorse the cession of Greek Macedonia to Bulgaria would gravely weaken the guerrilla movement and deprive it of its dwindling popular appeal. On the other hand, much of the hard core of the guerrilla forces in the defended areas was composed of Slav-Macedonian elements. There was indecision in the Kremlin. Then Tito, who had been slowly diminishing his support, announced on July 10, 1949, that he had closed his frontiers with Greece. Shortly thereafter the level of support across the Bulgarian and Albanian borders began to decline as well. The Soviet leaders evidently decided that it was no use throwing good money after bad.

By August 1949 the GNA assumed the general offensive and drove the remnants of the guerrilla forces into Albania and Bulgaria, where the Greek Communist leadership announced in December 1949 that it had resolved to suspend further operations "in order to bring peace to Greece."

#### Forms of Support.

Moral Support. Moral support by means of propaganda, both at home and abroad, was given by the Soviet Union, its satellites, and friends. The Greek government was attacked as not representing the free will of the people, and as dominated by former collaborators and fascists.

Political Support. Although British action against ELAS in 1944 had been met by widespread criticism, Stalin had kept his agreement with Churchill and had not interfered in any way in the counterinsurgent measures taken at that time. After 1945, however, and especially from 1946 on, the Russian and satellite governments attempted to apply pressure on the Greek government. At the Paris Peace Conference Russia (as well as England and the United States) opposed strongly any Greek demand for territorial changes. Toward the end of August the Russian and Yugoslav Ambassadors left Athens to go "on leave," and in August 1946 the Ukraine attacked the Greek government's policies in the Security Council as a threat to world peace.

On the other hand the Soviet Union agreed to an on-the-spot UN investigation of charges by the Greek government of interference by Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria in the guerrilla war (December 19, 1946). However, when the commission found that the charges were indeed correct, the Soviets used five vetoes to forestall any action by the Security Council. When in August 1947 the question was brought before the General Assembly, the Soviet Union, again supported by its satellites, refused to take part in any international action aimed at providing a solution to the Greek civil war.

Technical Support. Since 1943 liaison had been established between Tito's partisans and the ELAS forces. The level of technical proficiency on the Greek Communist side was high enough so that no technical aid, other than the provision of some medical-surgical help, was required.

Military Support. No organized military units from the satellite states crossed into Greek territory. Military support included sanctuary for guerrilla bands and the provision of medical and training facilities, and of equipment. After the Varkiza Agreement some 3,000 to 4,000 ELAS men crossed into Yugoslavia, from where they returned early in 1945. Smaller numbers were received by Bulgaria.<sup>23</sup>

From the spring of 1946, both countries, as well as Albania, offered refuge to bands that were hard pressed by GNA or police units. Wounded guerrillas were treated, some 6,317 in Yugoslavia alone;<sup>24</sup> others were reequipped and reinfilitrated into Greece. A training school for guerrilla officers was established in Yugoslavia in 1947. Permanent refugee camps for proguerrilla villagers were set up in all three countries.

Military equipment and other supplies were delivered in small quantities only. The absorptive capacity of the guerrilla bands for such equipment was, at first, severely limited. Undoubtedly, guerrilla bands operating in close proximity to the friendly frontiers benefited more than those operating further south. Until the end of 1947, moreover, military materiel support consisted largely of ammunition. Toward the end of 1947 some heavier weapons were delivered, but until the guerrillas held large contiguous areas along the frontier, bulk prevented large-scale support. Toward the end of 1948 newer types of weapons were provided. At Vitsi the GNA captured rifles, mortars, and ammunition of recent Soviet and Czech manufacture.

Relation of Support to Events. During 1944 the Soviet Union respected its zone-of-influence agreement and furnished no support or encouragement to the insurgents.<sup>25</sup> This changed considerably late in the following year. Support continued at the levels indicated during 1946 and until the fall of 1947. Late in the fall of 1947 Tito's plans for a greater Communist Balkan Federation led him to give more massive support to the guerrillas. Inter-Balkan rivalries, Tito's Balkan ambitions, and the ascendancy of the Stalinist wing within the guerrilla movement resulted finally in Tito's stopping aid to the Greek guerrillas and closing the Greek-Yugoslav border.

### The Counterinsurgent Response

#### Attempts to Cut Local Support

When the Germans withdrew from Greece, they left vast areas of the country under EAM administration. Although the national government appointed regional governors (nomarchs), these actually found themselves powerless. Only in the Peloponnesus and in some areas of the Epirus was the government able to exert some influence, and then only by making use of EDES and other right-wing bands. Employment of these bands and their ruthless action against leftists often complicated the picture further.

The ill-advised ELAS revolt of December 1944 cost EAM and the KKE a good deal of support. After the Varkiza Agreement the government was able to create new national forces to maintain law and order and to uphold the authority of the government (see Appendix A for a summary of Greek antiguerrilla forces). The first was a National Guard (NG), which originally was formed during the

battle for Athens in December 1944. As British units fanned out in February to take over the country from ELAS, the new units followed slowly, but it was not until May 15, 1945, that National Guardsmen had spread the power of the national government to all parts of Greece. As the NG battalions advanced, new units were raised from the local inhabitants by calling up a single class of the army reserve. The Athens NG battalions served as a sort of advance party, occupying new areas progressively and moving on after the formation of local battalions.

This, in theory, ought to have provided the government with reliable forces, well acquainted with the locality and not considered hostile by the local population. The trouble was, however, that the Athens battalions had originally been recruited from fanatical rightists, not very well disciplined and unwilling to abide by the letter of the law.<sup>26</sup> They freely disregarded civil liberties and took reprisals against ELAS men suspected of wrongdoing without much regard for evidence or procedure. The British looked with considerable disapproval on this behavior and in general exerted a moderating influence. Still and all, as the NG spread out through the countryside a sort of miniature counterrevolution followed in its wake. On the whole, conditions were not too oppressive, and as the central government began to operate more freely it proclaimed a series of amnesties which cleared the prisons of most of the persons who had been incarcerated. But vengeance is still a strong motive in Greece and by the summer of 1945 small leftist bands were again in the hills, augmented by some Communist die-hards who had never demobilized.

Normally the Greek countryside had been policed by a military gendarmerie, and as soon as possible this body was reestablished and dispatched to the provinces to relieve the NG of police duty. Gendarmes who had served during the occupation formed the core of the new force; only a few hundred were refused reinstatement. Retraining of the gendarmerie was carried out by the British police mission, largely drawn from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. By May 15 gendarmes were on duty in most provinces, and the NG became merely a frontier police, with the exception of a dozen battalions that remained as a central reserve to deal with disorders too great for the gendarmes to handle. In general, the reorganized gendarmerie made a better record, as far as behavior was concerned, than the NG. Although it contained many rightists and no person suspected of left-wing leanings was accepted, the gendarmes on the whole observed legal process and committed fewer acts of illegal violence.

Progress toward law and order was destroyed by the reappearance of Communist bands in the summer of 1945. The government

replied with the use of special counterband tactics. Groups of selected gendarmes, as well as volunteer groups of the right, hunted down these bands. However, as one observer pointed out, such operations tend to be somewhat self-defeating.<sup>27</sup> They usually involve counterterrorism and "terrorism is a source of disorder, which is precisely what the counterinsurgent aims to stop." Indeed, these activities appear to have been counterproductive, and when in early 1946 the KKE began its guerrilla war in earnest, the numbers in the hills had risen considerably. It is noteworthy that until 1948 many of the guerrillas claimed, not without some justice, that fear of government and government supporters had driven them to join the Andartes.<sup>28</sup>

The next stage was that of defensive warfare. In 1946 the troops of the GNA and the gendarmes were largely dissipated in small groups throughout the country and committed to the static defense of towns and villages. These tactics have been attacked as being due to interference by politicians who wanted their home districts protected and the result of bad British advice.<sup>29</sup> Actually, while these tactics did not bring victory, they staved off defeat and were at that time necessary since the GNA was still in the process of reorganization. Originally it was little more than a brigade strong; the GNA contained a number of Communist and antigovernment sympathizers in its ranks, and was not entirely reliable.<sup>30</sup> By denying the bands access to the main areas of population, the defensive warfare tactics performed a useful function. Greece, especially the mountain districts, is a food-deficit area and control of the villages and towns allowed a measure of food control. Although the Greek government and administration continued to be plagued by instability and inefficiency, static defense prevented any large ground swell from developing and contained the guerrilla movement.

During the winter of 1946-1947 plans were laid to break the hold of the guerrillas over mountain areas by offensive operations. Although the GNA was growing, it still did not have enough troops for simultaneous action throughout the country. It was now decided to close on certain guerrilla-infested districts, in the hope of forcing the guerrillas into battle and exterminating them. Then the bulk of the forces would move on, leaving a small number behind to deal with guerrilla remnants. Hopefully, the plan assumed, there would be gradual progress from south to north. The plan had only limited success, working best in the Peloponnese where the terrain and the population favored the government. In central Greece the clearing operations merely pushed the guerrillas into adjacent areas, while in the north the guerrillas sought transborder sanctuary. In short, the 1947 offensive petered out and during this year the guerrillas not only made good their

losses, but actually increased in numbers from around 13,000 to about 20,000.

There were a number of explanations for the apparent failure. For one thing, the guerrillas did not lose their popular support, in many cases given out of fear, because the local inhabitants believed that the guerrillas would return once the clearing operation was over. Therefore they did not provide the government with much help. The use of armed peasant militias to hold the cleared area also proved ineffective during this stage.

Simultaneously with the clearing operations, the government started a drive against Communist sympathizers and other leftists in the cities and the small towns. The results of this operation were also disputed. There is one body of opinion which holds that this action drove many people to join the bands in the hills, and another body which believes that it was a long overdue police measure. At the same time, the GNA also attempted to clear out unreliable elements from its ranks. Since these had to be kept in internment camps, a number of troops had to be diverted from hunting the bandits to guarding the army's own suspects.

Taken all in all, the stepped-up activities during 1947 were ineffective. At the same time, however, the guerrillas made no great progress, though they began to mass for the first time in larger units. If this seems a contradictory statement, perhaps it could be better formulated as follows: the government forces were not winning the war but the guerrillas were not either, because they were unable to attain the required degree of popular support to reach a truly insurrectionary revolutionary stage. By the end of 1947 a standoff position had been reached. The government forces, now numbering about 182,000, were unable to deal with the guerrillas, numbering some 20,000. Neither side had gained popular support to a large degree. But failure to gain this popular support was, in Greece at least, less vital to the government than it was to the guerrillas.

The Greek command changed its tactics in 1948. The army was to concentrate against the Communist defended zone in the Mt. Grammos massif, in the hope that the guerrillas would be forced to give battle there. Also, this was supposed to cut the supply lines by which the guerrillas in the interior were maintained. Because the ratio of government forces to guerrillas (roughly 6:1 exclusive of police and gendarmery) was held to be inadequate, the army was much enlarged. In addition, especially in southern Greece, peasant home-guards, commanded by regular army officers, were organized. While the army was to concentrate against the



defended guerrilla area, home-guards, gendarmery, and armed peasants were to conduct clean-up operations in southern and central Greece.

The plan, however, failed. Although by late spring 1948 the main Communist forces had been driven from Mt. Grammos into Albania, they reentered Greece further north in the Vitsi area, where they stood off heavy GNA attacks. Moreover, later that year, they re-occupied their old positions in the Mt. Grammos massif. Meanwhile, the pacification of the interior had also failed, though by the end of 1948 operations in the southern Peloponnese, always a stronghold of rightist sentiment, showed some signs of success. The year 1948 must be considered as a failure. Concentrating the army against the Communist defended bases had simply allowed the guerrillas to extend their activity in the interior.

Even more serious was the fact that, although the Communists lacked mass appeal, three years of indecisive warfare had led to a profound feeling in many Greek circles that a compromise solution might become necessary. To counteract this trend a new government was formed, and General Alexander Papagos, the respected and popular victor of the 1940-1941 campaign in Albania, was recalled from retirement and appointed commander in chief. A new plan of action was drawn up with the aid of the US mission. The plan distinguished between two different objectives. First, there were the Communist defended areas in the Grammos-Vitsi region which could be contained and eventually destroyed by orthodox military offensive action. Secondly, there was the problem of the roving bands in the rest of the country. To deal with the bands it was necessary to pursue them relentlessly by day and night so that they would either give battle or disperse. At the same time, the YIAFKA cells that provided them with intelligence and recruits would have to be destroyed. The GNA command realized that its forces were inadequate for carrying out both missions at once. It was decided, therefore, to contain the Grammos-Vitsi area and to spread pacification northward from the Peloponnese. Here, one district after the other was cleared and then garrisoned by the armed peasant units first organized in 1948. The YIAFKA cells were broken up and a great number of persons were detained. Even within the GNA all personnel under suspicion were interned.

The plan succeeded extremely well. As soon as the population was assured that the Communists would not return to wreak vengeance, support of the government increased. Information and intelligence regarding guerrilla agents became available and many areas were completely pacified. The key to success was that sufficient forces, mainly semimilitary in nature, were left behind to prevent any re-infiltration by the guerrillas. Moving on a broad front from south



to north, the army reached the Communist fortified areas by July 1949. Already earlier that year the Communists, fearing that time was running out, had attempted to mount a strong diversionary attack against Florina, but had been driven back after some hard fighting. Now the GNA went on to a conventional offensive and by early August the guerrillas were driven into Albania. During this final phase of the fighting the Greek air force played a useful role, bombing guerrilla positions and concentrations. On September 6, 1949, the Greek Prime Minister declared that the war was over.

#### Attempts to Block Outside Support

Closing an extensive border is a military undertaking of enormous dimensions and may not be feasible in certain types of terrain. It certainly was beyond the capabilities of the GNA in 1946-1947. Therefore, diplomatic attempts were made to put pressure on the adjoining Soviet satellite states to cease, or at least reduce, their support of the guerrillas. In these endeavors the Greek government had the support of Great Britain and the United States.

As early as late November 1946 the Greek government brought this matter to the attention of the United Nations. The Soviet Union did not use its veto, despite its opposition, and on December 19, 1946, the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution establishing a Commission of Investigation to ascertain the facts regarding the alleged border violations in northern Greece. The commission published its report on June 27, 1947, substantially endorsing Greek charges, but for the moment Soviet vetoes in the Security Council prevented any real action.

The report of the commission was nonetheless not without value. The British general elections of 1945 had ousted Mr. Churchill and brought Labor to power. Unlike Mr. Churchill, the Laborites were generally unsympathetic to King George and believed that his partisans were out-and-out reactionaries. Although Labor equally disliked the Greek Communists, the unquestionable brutality, corruption, and inefficiency of the Greek government lost it many friends in Great Britain and gave the guerrillas additional moral support abroad.

The reports of the UN commission, which substantiated at least a limited foreign aggression, were of considerable value in preserving British support for the Greek government. Great Britain carried the burden for another year, and when early in 1947 it announced that it would have to retrench, the UN reports

aided President Truman in gaining public and Congressional support for his decision, announced March 12, 1947, to extend aid to Greece.

The pronounced and clear intention of the United States to aid Greece also had some effects in the Communist countries. Stalin, it is reported by Djilas, cooled off in his intentions to support the Greek Communists. Realizing the firm western commitments, he decided to back off. To be sure, Stalin's remarks must be read in the light of the coming Yugoslav-Moscow split. Nonetheless, they were another straw in the wind. Moreover, within Greece the United States enjoyed a very high reputation, both on the right and with the moderate left, and US support of the Greek government gained the adherence of many still uncommitted.

The closing of the Yugoslav frontier was perhaps the most important factor in cutting off outside support during the war's last phase. In part this was made possible by the policy of restraint urged by the JUSMAPG advisers on the Greek government. Although the guerrillas were clearly given refuge, rested, re-equipped, and aided to reenter Greek territory, the advisers restrained the Greek government from undertaking reprisals against Albanian, Yugoslav, or Bulgarian territory. When the guerrillas positioned their artillery so that counterbattery fire was likely to stray across the frontiers the US advisers urged the utmost restraint. It seems likely that this policy paid good dividends, because crossing into satellite territory might have prevented the development of the rift between Moscow and Tito.

At the same time the continued efforts of the Greek government and its friends at the UN had certain salutary effects. The responsibility of the satellites for supplying the guerrillas was clearly established, and world opinion generally supported the Greek government despite its many defects. And when in the fall of 1949 the last remnants of the guerrilla forces took refuge in Albania and Bulgaria, those governments announced that the refugees would be interned and not allowed to retain their arms, thus relieving the Greek government of considerable anxiety.

Geography, while it aided the guerrillas, also hampered their foreign supporters. In the initial stages the guerrillas required only small amounts of infantry weapons and communications equipment, and this could be smuggled in over the mountain areas. However, heavier equipment proved more difficult to introduce through the mountains. Virtually the only other supply route was by sea, and once the Greek navy possessed modern equipment, it could fairly easily intercept major supplies sent in that way. Port control remained difficult, but no major quantities could reach the guerrillas by this route.

### Adequacy of General and Local Administrative Machinery

Performance of Police Function. Much blame for the long duration of the war must be placed on the inefficiency of the Greek administration. Essentially from 1944 to 1949 Greece had the prewar type of Balkan regime with a civil war superimposed on it. Contrasts in wealth, an irresponsible ruling class, and a corrupt bureaucracy persisted. Ministers changed with great frequency, stakes for gaining office were high, while at the bottom the petty bureaucrats were miserably underpaid and could only support their families by increasing their pay from irregular sources. The great increase in the cost of living after the end of the war made this traditional problem even more acute. In April 1949 there was a strike of civil servants in southern Greece caused not by Communist machinations, but by pure economic misery.

A second evil was overcentralization. Even minor decisions were referred to Athens, where frequent changes in cabinets were followed by changes among top administrators, seriously interfering with the work of government bureaus.

A third difficulty was the almost complete lack of supplies and, at first, transport. In 1944-1945 even the simplest items, such as paper and pencils, were lacking, to say nothing of typewriters and files. This greatly hampered efforts to establish population control. It was not possible to issue identity cards (already introduced by the Germans but destroyed on instructions from ELAS). Taking a census and other such measures were practically impossible. These material problems were slowly ameliorated during the civil war by foreign aid.

At the same time, in spite of charges that the government was dictatorial and fascist, there was at first no serious government effort to deal with the KKE, which was allowed to function, especially in the major cities, until the autumn of 1947. In the provinces, to be sure, Communists were often arrested, and some were mistreated or even murdered by right-wing elements, but nothing was done in Athens until the summer of 1947. In July 1947 there was a wave of arrests. The arrests did not always hit the right people; indeed, the police were flooded with denunciations and the indiscriminate arrests brought some new recruits to the Communist-led bands.<sup>31</sup> As the government swung too far from leniency to repression, even right-wing sources admit that "some people were forced to join the bands . . . because of these measures."<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the period of the civil war the regular law courts remained active, although offenses involving help to the rebels were dealt with by courts martial. The fact that any Communist activity was permitted as late as a year after the party had resorted to armed rebellion against the legal government is proof of truly remarkable tolerance on the part of the Greek government.

The last stages of the war saw a definite improvement, albeit only temporary, in the top level of the government. From 1946 to 1949 rivalry among the party bosses had hampered the effective prosecution of the war. In January 1949, however, there was widespread feeling that better top leadership was required. In January the Sophoulis cabinet was reshuffled and General Papagos was entrusted with the position of commander in chief and given wide powers. Departmental rivalries were overcome by the creation of a War Council of senior ministers, and it was under its direction that the war was brought to its victorious conclusion. As for the police and gendarmery, they had been brutal before the war and improved very little during the hostilities despite the efforts of the British Police Mission. As anti-Communist an observer as Professor Seaton-Watson observed that the police indulged in unnecessary brutality, listened to malicious accusations, mistreated suspects, and generally indulged in "much unnecessary and inexcusable victimisation and tyranny." He concluded that "the bitterness which it created supplied for three years a stream of recruits to the rebels."<sup>33</sup>

An associated problem was the inability of the police and administration to offer effective inducements to the guerrillas to surrender. Amnesties were offered more than once, with small results. The guerrilla rank and file feared vengeance, and experience revealed that they had reason. Though the government might have sincerely wished to pardon those who surrendered, once they got back to their villages and towns the local people who had suffered from the war were less tolerant.

Scope and Degree of Control. Given the circumstances cited above, the scope and degree of control exercised over political opponents, population movements, and finally food control, varied. In some localities rightists did indeed establish a stern regime, not unmingled with terror. In other localities government representatives were more lenient. Everywhere there was a high degree of arbitrariness and inefficiency. To some degree this was due to the conditions of war, occupation, resistance, and civil war; it was also typical of Balkan administration.

The task of the government was also complicated because of two agencies which exercised considerable influence over functions normally handled by the central administration. In economic matters UNRRA, guided and, to some degree only, controlled by Greek government officials, and in military matters the Greek General Staff, supported by the British Military Mission, achieved a marked degree of independence. The distribution of food by UNRAA might have given the government considerable control over the food supply in a food-deficit country, but initially the government exercised only limited control over the agency.

The military gained some of their independence through the efforts of the British Mission to free the army of "politics." To be sure, the Military Mission did not have the powers of the Police Mission. The latter had mandatory powers which permitted it to veto promotions and transfers within the force, but the British Military Mission also achieved considerable influence. In practice the beneficiaries of its influence were moderate royalist officers, and this favoritism alienated many conservative and anti-Communist officers. There was also some friction between the British Mission and the Greeks in general, which impeded the efficiency of the GNA.

There were thus many conflicting parties vying for control in Athens, with the British, and later the US, missions trying to exert a moderating influence; there was galloping inflation and the lack of even basic supplies during the first few months; there were bitter memories of war, resistance, and civil war. With all these factors affecting government operations, the scope, degree, and effectiveness of administrative controls in Greece was always far from perfect.

#### Dealing with Public Opinion.

Public Opinion in Greece. Here, without a doubt, the government scored its greatest triumph, or it is perhaps better to say that the Communists were unable to make sufficient headway despite the undoubted mistakes and shortcomings of the national government. The first mistake made by the Communists was that during the rising of December 1944 ELAS practiced extreme violence against its enemies. People's courts were established to try persons accused of various crimes allegedly committed during the occupation; torture and mutilation were not infrequent; and several hundred persons were thus killed. Another psychological mistake was the insurgents' decision to take hostages. When ELAS was forced to evacuate Athens it took with it about 15,000 hostages,

of whom 4,000 perished due to lack of clothing and food, or were shot out of hand. These cruelties turned many former sympathizers against ELAS, and the Communists. Old-line republican leaders who had stood with ELAS during the resistance turned their backs on the left.

The second factor turning popular opinion against the KKE and its guerrilla war was the alliance between the Greek Communists and Greece's traditional national enemies. With Balkan national feelings running high, such associations did much to destroy any appeal the guerrillas might have had. The government was able to exploit the two themes, the bloody terrorism of ELAS and the associations of the KKE with the national enemies, in its propaganda. The result was that despite the mistakes of the government, the guerrillas could never gather that degree of popular support required to become a real revolutionary movement.

Public Opinion Elsewhere. Initially, the guerrilla movement enjoyed a certain support abroad, not only in Communist countries, but also in Great Britain, France, and the United States. The British intervention of December 1944 had been widely condemned in democratic countries, and the British Labor Government was by no means well disposed toward the rightist and royalist factions. Only gradually, under the impact of the Cold War more than as the result of any government propaganda, did Western public opinion change. The reports of the UN Security Council Commission also did much to bring a change in public attitudes.

#### Psychological Effects of Specific Incidents

As indicated above, there were a number of turning points. The insurrection of December 1944 with its attendant atrocities did much to divorce the moderates from the extreme left. The association between the left and Greece's Slavic neighbors, openly acknowledged by 1947, further damaged the appeal of the left.

The identification of the United States, with its considerable Greek immigrant population, with the anti-Communist struggle gave the government considerable appeal.

On the other hand, the heavy-handed methods of the government, as well as counterterror methods such as those practiced initially by the NG, or by official or semiofficial armed bands, or by right-wing terror organizations such as Colonel Grivas's "X" group, were often counterproductive.



Tito's defection clearly had a most damaging impact on the guerrilla movement. It overshadowed in importance the rifts within the movement's leadership and the replacement of Markos. On the government side, the appointment of General Papagos did much to restore confidence and to combat willingness to compromise.

#### Motivation and Indoctrination

On the guerrilla side morale was uneven. In the territories which they controlled the rebels forced unwilling peasants into their ranks and inflicted horrible punishments on those who tried to desert. But many of the rebels fought neither from fear nor from sordid ambition. Many were veteran Communists, while others fought for what they believed was freedom and independence.

On the government side there was also a mixture of motives. On the whole, the government, as has been repeatedly remarked, was able to profit from the nationalist, even xenophobic, hatred of the Greeks against their Slav neighbors. Late in 1948 unreliable soldiers were interned and given special reeducation. General Papagos testifies that rehabilitated men were formed into special units, some of which distinguished themselves in action.

#### Outcome of the Revolt

By the end of 1949 only a few small, starving, and desperate guerrilla bands were left in the mountains, trying to survive. The guerrilla government announced that it had ceased operations to save Greece from destruction. A clear military victory had been achieved.

In Greece victory was achieved almost exclusively by force. There were, however, very special circumstances. These included the inability of the Communists to gain the support of a critical segment of the Greek people, due in part to their association with the national enemy, and in part to their resort to rapine, extortion, arson, murder, and terrorism. Their attempt to move from the petite to the grande guerre in 1949 and the closing of the Yugoslav frontier sealed their doom. Sustained by the United States, supported by an intensely nationalist population, the government was able to win the civil war without political concessions, but rather by military means alone.



And yet, perhaps it is too early to call the Greek civil war a closed chapter. The war broke out, in part at least, as a reaction against the evils of the past, yet the war made them worse. The economic and political problems of Greece have not been solved, the royal crown is not safe, and the same political bosses still maneuver for power and the spoils of office. The outcome of these problems is still in doubt. In the perspective of the late 1940s, however, the KKE failed in its bid for control in Greece and the country remained in the Western camp. The Truman Doctrine saved Greece from communism, but with three Communist countries on its border the nation is still vulnerable to Communist infiltration. Discontent within the country, fed in part by the ineptitude of the royal family, has given the domestic Communists fresh ammunition and at the time of writing the future of the royal throne, indeed the stability of Greece, seems once again in doubt.

## Appendix A

### GREEK ANTIGUERRILLA FORCES, 1945-1949

Operations against the Greek Communist guerrillas during this period were conducted by air and naval forces, as well as ground forces. The bulk of the operations and the main burden fell, however, on the ground forces. The organization and the nature of these forces is discussed below. In the period 1945-1949 these included the Greek National Army, the National Defense Corps, the gendarmery, police, and armed civilians.

#### The Greek National Army

When the Greek government returned to the country in 1944 it possessed only one understrength brigade and the "Sacred Squadron," a unit of some 700 officers. Initially, Great Britain undertook to train and equip a new army of 100,000 by 1948, a goal revised upward to 120,000 in 1947. Eventually the strength of the army was raised to 147,000 effectives. In late 1948 General Papagos, who then was offered the overall command, demanded that the total strength be raised to 250,000, but the defeat of the guerrillas made this further increase unnecessary.

At the outset of operations the standard unit of the army was the division. Two types of divisions, mountain and field, existed. Neither type had supporting arms as organic components. Armor, engineers, and other branches were rather attached when and where needed, subject to the control of the various directorates of the general staff. The division consisted of little more than headquarters, infantry, and signal elements. A mountain division was normally reinforced by a squadron of cavalry, a machine-gun company, and a regiment of pack artillery. The field divisions had attached armored cavalry and field artillery. The real difference between field and mountain divisions lay in strength and transport. The mountain division had 8,500 men and animal transport; the field division had 10,500 men and motor transport.

Late in 1948, on the urging of the JUSMAPG, a standard division, containing as an organic part of its organization

artillery and engineer components, was adopted. The new standard divisions, of which there were six, had a strength of 9,300 men and included an engineer battalion, a scout company, and a battery of 75mm. pack howitzers. Also in 1948, the army began to replace British with US equipment. There was an increase in light automatic weapons throughout the army. British equipment was concentrated in two divisions and in the National Defense Corps.

During the early antiguerrilla operations an important part was played by some 40 commando units, formed in 1947 and organized in 4 groups of 4 companies, some 625 men each, in 1948. The commando groups, carrying only light weapons and a somewhat heavier proportion of automatic arms than the regular army units, were used on most operations. In time, they seemed to gain a monopoly on operations, to the detriment of the fighting spirit of the rest of the army. Therefore, beginning in 1949, Papagos used them mainly as a strategic reserve and for special enterprises.

The army possessed its normal complement of military police and intelligence units on the British model. A field security section was attached to each division, and local area commands had an intelligence unit attached. Overall direction of army intelligence was by the Directorate of Intelligence within the General Staff; the Directorate of Intelligence also maintained liaison with the gendarmery, which came under the Ministry of Justice.

#### The National Defense Corps

This organization was established in October 1947 to replace the National Guard, an outfit hastily formed in the wake of the Athens fighting of December 1944, which had been poorly controlled and guilty of many excesses. The National Defense Corps was to consist of 40 battalions of 500 men each, and to be used as territorial defense units. In theory it was supposed to be a militia, with the men living at home but instantly ready for action in their own localities. The total number of battalions was raised to 100 in January 1948. About half of the 97 units actually formed were absorbed into the regular army and employed as standard infantry battalions. The National Defense Corps did some useful service guarding cleared areas against reinfiltration by the guerrillas, but the regular army was never too happy with this organization.

### The Gendarmerie

An armed body under the Ministry of Justice, the gendarmerie served outside the limits of towns having municipal police forces. It had extensively collaborated with the Germans and during 1945 it had to be reconstituted. Nonetheless, most of the prewar and wartime members of the force were readmitted after some perfunctory screening. The force was established at 32,000 and used in military operations during 1946-1947. It was not a success. The great usefulness of police and gendarmerie in counterinsurgency work lies in its familiarity with the local area and its population. Used in large bodies outside their home areas the gendarmes did not do well. After the NDC was formed the force was reduced to 25,000. It then performed in a satisfactory manner.

### The Police

The local police played only a minor role in counterinsurgency operations.

### Armed Civilians

During the December 1944 emergency the government had armed and employed some right-wing civilian groups, essentially remnants of EDES and the even more extreme right-wing "X" led by Colonel Grivas. These had proven unsatisfactory, given to excesses, undisciplined, and in general counterproductive. The fact remained that the need to defend civilian areas from guerrilla incursions tied down over 50,000 troops. Therefore, in 1948 certain areas of the Peloponnese and the Epirus were allowed to form civilian home-guard units, usually trained by officers and noncommissioned officers detached from the regular army. The total number of armed civilians is unavailable. They appear to have functioned satisfactorily in the areas in which they lived, but were almost useless for anything but static defense.

### Footnotes

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4. F. Smothers et al., Report on the Greeks (New York, 1951), pp. 31-41, 152-154.
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6. David Galula, Counter Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice (New York, 1964), pp. 18-19.
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16. Wainhouse, p. 223.
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18. Galula, pp. 18-19.
19. Smothers et al., pp. 159-168. The quotation is from p. 159.
20. Papagos, p. 234.
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25. Ismay, Memoirs, p. 369.
26. McNeill, p. 198.
27. Galula, p. 74.
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above and former intelligence officer.

## Malaya, 1948-1960

by

Riley Sunderland

In suppressing the Communist insurrection of 1948-1960, the government of the Federation of Malaya, as it was called during most of the campaign, was finally able to isolate the Communist guerrillas from the actual and potential sources of their support. An idea of how this was done, and of the course of the campaign, must include an appreciation of the peoples and terrain of Malaya. First I must note that in writing of the episode I have excluded the island and city of Singapore. The Singapore base did give invaluable and essential logistic support to the government's armed forces, the people of Singapore were an intelligence source (through family and business ties), and there were also Communists among them. The campaign, however, was fought on the mainland.

In 1948, Malaya was inhabited by 2.4 million Malays, 1.9 million Chinese, a few hundred thousand East Indians, and a statistically insignificant but politically and economically powerful group of British subjects. Malaya was the homeland of the Malays. Reflecting this, land titles and posts in the Civil Service (with a few exceptions at the top, of which more later) were reserved to them. Here lay a Chinese grievance. The Malays were Muslim farming folk, or fishers, riverine rather than jungle dwellers. They were easygoing and appeared indolent to Western eyes. They seemed most unwilling to be obliged to compete with the Chinese in trade or government. That they were of a people with a tradition of violence, and Muslim, deserves to be kept in mind. The guerrilla leadership kept in mind that provoking the Malay community beyond a certain point might bring on reprisal massacres of the Chinese community.

The latter point is relevant because the Communist guerrillas, or terrorists, were 95% Chinese. The Chinese community as of 1948 was in Malaya, but not of it. Before the war it had

been largely self-policing through its families, clans, and secret societies. It had held aloof from the government and had been tacitly encouraged in this. This had its consequences, such as that in 1948 there were but 250 Chinese policemen in Malaya--from a community of almost 2,000,000.

The picture was complicated, and the background set for insurrection, by the squatters. So much land was not suitable for rice that Malaya in the 1940s was a food-deficit area. The situation became acute in World War II. To get food and to escape Japanese mistreatment, some 400,000 or 500,000 Chinese became squatters and set up their holdings on the jungle fringe. Here they were completely outside the structure of public administration. Indeed, in some areas, the Communist Party supplied what administration there was.

The land of Malaya in 1948 was 80% jungle. No point of importance was more than a few hours' walk from jungle cover. The soil of Malaya is fertile, and gardens can be quickly set up on cleared land. Most of the jungle is primary, and passage off-trail and off-road, though slow, is perfectly practicable. The jungle offered the possibility of sanctuary to the guerrillas.

The government of the Federation of Malaya was, as the name suggests, a federal one. In 1948 it had certain objective weaknesses. The police were 2,000 under strength. Many had been compromised by collaboration, others were simply inexperienced. The heart of the old pre-1941 government had been the elite Malayan Civil Service, some 250 graduates of the great British universities, mostly British subjects, and so carefully chosen they were locally known as "the heaven-born." Some had been killed in World War II, many would never shake off the effects of Japanese captivity. There was widespread malnutrition and tuberculosis among the population, while there was in 1948 as much common-law crime in a month as in a whole prewar year.\* Labor unrest was serious, and many unions were led by Communists (as demonstrated when their officers took their treasuries and fled to the jungle when the insurrection began).

### THE GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION

#### Political and Social Antecedents

The change in overseas Chinese society that followed on migration was perhaps fundamental to the development of the guerrilla

movement. Much of the stability of Chinese society depended upon the authority of the old. In Malaya, a new world of many differences from mainland China, what the old knew and thought was heavily discounted. To the restless young Chinese came the Communists offering answers and also offering new ways of winning approval from the peer group. To many young Chinese, the Communist Party seemed to offer a way to rise quickly in the state and in society, in ways and at a pace of which their fathers had never dreamed. The attraction of something new, different, modern, and sophisticated was a powerful one, much more powerful, it may be suggested, than the abstractions of Marxist economics.

The Communist Party of Malaya was organized in the 1920s and underwent the schisms and vicissitudes of those days within the Communist movement. During the war, Southeast Asia Command sought to organize a guerrilla force among and from the Malayan Communist Party. Arms for 3,500 guerrillas, 1,500,000 pounds of supplies, and 510 instructional and liaison personnel from Force 136, a part of the British clandestine warfare organization, were airdropped to guerrillas who made no secret of their Communist affiliations. Added to what the guerrillas salvaged from the battlefields of the Malayan campaign, this made a most effective armory. Its effectiveness was increased by the instruction in jungle and guerrilla war given by Force 136.

There was a brief interregnum between the end of the war and British occupation of Malaya in which the Communists may have missed their chance to seize the country and offer a fait accompli. The British forced demobilization on them and they went through the motions of acquiescing. However, demobilized guerrillas enrolled and kept active in a veterans association, while in the jungle others kept intact the skeleton of a formidable guerrilla force. In the jungle there were training camps, workshops, depots, and schools, i.e., a workable system of bases for insurgency.

In the winter of 1947-1948, the economic position of Europe, and of course Britain, was very bad. The dollar earnings from Malayan tin and rubber played a part in what support the United Kingdom could then find. Early in 1948, there was a large Communist conference at Calcutta, attended by senior Party members from the USSR and Asia. There may well be a causal relationship between this and later happenings. Certainly some well-informed students believe so. In any event, that summer revolts flared all over Southeast Asia, and terror, e.g., assassinations, in Malaya reached such a pitch that the government had to arm itself with extraordinary powers by proclaiming an emergency.

### Political Structure

The geographic structure of the Malayan Communist Party somewhat resembled that of the Federation government, in that there was a committee for each state and colony and a central committee with Federation-wide powers. District committees shared the boundaries of the government's districts, while branch committees were in or near population centers. These four levels of committees were linked organizationally, in that the Central Committee was drawn from the membership of state committees, and so on down. Communication was a real problem, since the Party lacked radio links. The normal mode of communication was by courier. When penetrated by police intelligence (known as Special Branch in Malaya and so to be named hereinafter), the courier system was dangerously vulnerable. Its couriers could also be ambushed. To the Communists of that year the slowness of the system was its obvious flaw; they sought to compensate by decentralizing and letting the several committees retain considerable initiative in executing broad directives.

### Military Structure

The Party's armed forces from 1948 on were called by them the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA). In form, they paralleled the political structure. That is, each state committee was also the command and staff of a regiment, while the Central Committee acted as the armed forces' high command. Regiments, however, more nearly resembled task forces than what the Westerner thinks of as a regiment, with its formal organization. The Malayan Communist regiment was a headquarters immediately over a variable number of independent platoons. Each platoon was in turn commanded by a district committee, in that its commander would also be the district committee chairman.

On almost all occasions, the Communist terrorist (CT) was uniformed as a Chinese soldier of the 20th Century. He wore a cloth cap with red star, Khaki shirt and breeches, and rolled leggings. The MRLA tried to give the impression of a smart, professional force. It was true that the guerrilla could take off his uniform to double as an assassin, but terror, food lifts, intelligence, reconnaissance, and security outpost duty tended to be, and in the beginning were, the work of specialists, outside the MRLA.

The strength figure for the MRLA in 1948 was more than 12,000.<sup>2</sup>

Logistical support for the MRLA was provided by the Min Chung Yuen Thong, commonly known in Malaya as the Min Yuen. These were the active sympathizers for the guerrillas among the outside population. They provided information on plans and movements of soldiers and police; food, cash, cloth, drugs, paper, ink, flashlights, plastic sheets; replacements and recruits. They also conducted propaganda. While they could and did extort, violence was left to the MRLA. The Min Yuen initially numbered more than 20,000.<sup>3</sup> If to this one adds the 12,000-plus of the MRLA, one can get an idea of the numerical aspects of the problem facing the 11 peace-strength infantry battalions and 10,000 police in Malaya in 1948.

One must also underscore the functional importance of the Min Yuen. The guerrillas could no more operate without them than an army could without its logistical base. Indeed, the basic guerrilla LOC was the paths taken by the food supply parties of the Min Yuen. This LOC was as vital as any in the world, and was also as vulnerable, once the soldiers and police had learned how to find and cut it.

#### Doctrine, Training, and Indoctrination

The MRLA sought to apply the teachings of Mao Tse-tung on guerrilla war to Malaya. Whether they were correct in trying to imitate him may be doubted, since the Communist rebellion was so closely identified with the Chinese alone, but that they did try cannot be questioned and explains their policies and procedures. Greatly summarized, Mao's doctrine of guerrilla war in the underdeveloped nations calls for the effort to be made in the countryside. The model of such a conflict has three stages. In the first, the guerrillas by ambush and terror seek to drive government personnel out of areas which they then convert into so-called liberated areas. In these they form organized forces, which in the second stage sally out to link up liberated areas. In the third stage large, conventionally organized forces operating from liberated areas fight regular large-scale battles with the government's forces and overthrow it. In 1948, the guerrillas thought that in some parts of the country they were ready to begin on the second stage, given their authority among the Chinese squatters and explicitly assuming that the British forces were no more able to operate in the jungle than they had been in 1941-1942.

The Malayan Communists planned to attack first a series of small targets, such as police stations, rubber plantations, and railway bridges. When they had destroyed these in an area, then they would build larger forces within that area and move on to bigger targets, including military camps. In their operations, they expected reconnaissance of the most painstaking sort to show them soft targets. If the target were too strong, they would break off action. Here was a major weakness, for as the insurrection went on, far too many Communist attacks were not pressed home, and soldiers and police learned that to meet an ambush by an immediate counterattack, or to attack on any contact, was the best tactic, for the guerrillas would almost always conclude their information had been faulty and retreat.

The guerrillas appreciated that success would take time and called such an insurrection, or a civil war fought in such a manner, "protracted conflict," saying that they sought it.

Training was given to members of the MRLA in jungle training camps. Until government pressure made itself felt, these were well-designed, well-built training centers hidden in the sheltering jungle. They had hutments, rifle ranges, and classrooms. Training followed a carefully thought-out schedule and provided all the skills necessary for jungle war. Political training was an integral and most important part of the curriculum. Following graduation from the training center, the guerrilla received continued political instruction in his unit. Self-criticism and group criticism were familiar features. A system of points for good and bad performances was taken with utmost seriousness. Discipline was strict and men were executed for serious infractions.

Within the Min Yuen, training and indoctrination proceeded within the party cell or organization group for the case in which there would be only one or a few Party members. In group study sessions, in home study, the Min Yuen poured over the Chinese Communist scriptures, and here too group and self-criticism was a normal feature.

The end product, as far as the MRLA was concerned, was a highly disciplined, well-trained, highly motivated individual, who was not easily replaced if he was killed or captured, or if his mental set changed and he defected.



## Logistics

Guerrilla logistics in Malaya should be seen in the light of the terrain and the geographic situation. To the north was Thailand, on either side the sea, and to the south was Singapore Island. Some money and a few recruits may have come north from Singapore, but the causeway and the strait were too easy to watch. Little if any aid seems to have been smuggled ashore. For one thing, the Royal Navy was present in strength; for another, the fisher-folk were largely Malay, with a built-in antipathy to anything the Chinese might attempt, and so ready to see and report. Thailand was non-Communist, while the sheer physical problem of smuggling anything down from Northern Vietnam or Communist China across Thailand seems to have been regarded as insoluble. As it happened, Malayan Communists could and did flee north across the border to shelter in the Thai jungles, and then slip back again, but this was a very different matter from drawing logistic support from Thailand. In practice, the Malayan Communists had to depend on what they could get from within Malaya, plus a trickle from Thailand and Singapore.

Initially, the MRLA and Min Yuen seem to have viewed their logistic problems with equanimity. The Malayan Communist Party was 95% Chinese and the Chinese diet of rice with some vegetables, fish, or meat lends itself well to guerrilla war. A woman's silk stocking will hold a week's supply of rice and be very easy to carry, in sharp contrast to the Western soldier's bulky rations. The Chinese squatters could supply rice in any desired quantity; vegetables and bits of meat were no problem. The rice was easy to transport and store. For weapons and ammunition, the guerrillas had their initial stocks, almost entirely of British manufacture, and confidently expected to seize more from soldiers and police as a result of successful ambushes and attacks. As noted above, provision of rice and other supplies was the task of the Min Yuen.

## OBJECTIVES

### Political

The formal objective was to set up a Malayan Peoples' Republic. Nominally, it would include all communities, i.e., peoples, in Malaya. In practice, given the racial composition of the

party, it would have been a Chinese government. The party was marked in practice by the most virulent racism, and anti-European and anti-Western slogans far antedated the Sino-Soviet split.

This racial bias was perceived in Malaya and was a real handicap to the Malayan Communist Party. Anti-Western slogans might be thought irrelevant to the Malay. However, Chinese clan-nishness, Chinese dietary habits, and Chinese religious practices too faithfully matched Muslim ideas about pig-eating infidels to let the Malay watch the growth of a militant Chinese faction or the establishment of a Chinese Malaya with any great equanimity.

### Military

The Malayan Communist guerrillas sought by raids and ambushes to drive out soldiers and police from a selected area and thus shatter public administration there. Initially, they believed that the British forces could not operate in the jungle and took it as given that the jungle would be a sanctuary for them. From it they would strike; into it they would retreat; and on its fringe they would build their forces until these could meet the British troops in open battle. In practice, this meant that raiding parties of guerrillas would attack police posts and rubber plantations while parties of assassins would kill individuals or families. At the beginning of the episode, they raided isolated villages and small towns and, overestimating their strength, attempted to hold the village of Pulai, in Kelantan. They set up a "liberated area," recruited the locals, dug trenches, and occupied the village for several weeks. On August 7, 1948, they were driven out by troops of the Malay Regiment with tactical air support. The attempt to hold ground was a rare episode, not repeated thereafter.

### Geographic

The basic geographic aim of the Malayan Communist Party was to dominate the countryside. It does not seem possible to say that they regarded any one part of Malaya as of more strategic importance than another. Where there were many Chinese squatters, where there were no police or local administration, there initially the guerrillas were strongest. Given the difficulty of cross-country transport of food, massing guerrillas was physically difficult, while the fact that the police and army could and did patrol

industriously within the jungle made it likely that any such concentration would be spotted. Even the massing of several hundred guerrillas was quite a feat, and this in turn limited the guerrillas' ability to select targets. In practice, as they recognized as early as the winter of 1948-1949, the British forces were more mobile than they were. This meant they could not yet attempt warfare and had to drop back on the scale of conflict to terror. The terrorist would seek easy targets.

## TECHNIQUES

### Military

In executing raids and ambushes, the Malayan guerrillas stressed the importance of the best intelligence and most careful reconnaissance. For both they made extensive use of Min Yuen personnel. These were expected to give the raw data on troop and police movements and deployment, fortifications, fields of fire, personalities, unit identifications, and so on. Since time was not a constraint, the most painstaking care went into these tasks. When contact had been made, the guerrillas would, if the situation indicated, make use of battle drills that they had been taught in 1944-1945 by SEAC's instructors. Their marksmanship was not good.

Their great advantage in the period of about 1948-1952 lay in their jungle craft. The guerrilla was more lightly equipped than the soldier and could outrun him. The soldier was weighted down, especially by his rations, and the guerrilla would seem to disappear. Moreover, the guerrilla once out of sight knew all the tricks of hiding his tracks that the American Indian had known, and used them. For his part, the soldier in the years 1948-1952 would simply stare at the ground without seeing the telltale marks. Or, if the terrain permitted, instead of running for any distance, the guerrilla might simply take cover in the jungle and let the soldier walk on past.

The guerrillas also developed some of the abilities of wild game. In the early days, soldiers in the jungle on patrol would smoke, talk, use hair oil, and wash with soap. The guerrillas for their part would boast that they could tell Gurkhas from British by the scent of their tobacco. Sound would carry far in the jungle. Soap film drifting downstream would tell its own story.

All this together meant that the guerrilla of 1948-1952 would, as the press loved to put it, simply disappear into the jungle. The soldiers, for their part, by sweeping the jungle, would keep the guerrillas from massing or moving freely, but the sweep was no counter to terrorism or subversion.

### Political Warfare\*

This very important branch of activity in isolating the Communists was handled by a small but carefully selected Psychological Warfare (PW) section, whose aim was to use planned propaganda in order to reduce the enemy's will to fight. PW was regarded as an offensive support weapon (like artillery, air support, engineers, etc.) and used as such--both strategically and tactically. Its main strategic tasks were to foment distrust in the Malayan Communist Party leadership, to instill lack of faith in victory, and above all to induce surrenders. The "surrender rate" was the key to accurate intelligence and consequently to successful ambushes and other operations in the jungle. It was found that there was a direct relationship between the monthly surrender rate and the monthly rate of killing terrorists.

In conducting psychological warfare against the enemy (similar operations to ensure the active support of the people were equally important and are described below), it was found best to pick a main theme, a truthful and credible one, and to stick to it. As an example of this, in 1955 when the first general election was planned, it was decided to pump into the jungle by leaflet, by rumors, and by voice aircraft, the theme written in a letter by a surrendered CT to his friends in the North Pahang Regional Base: "You cannot expect the people to support the [Communist] armed struggle when they are being given what they want by constitutional means." This theme, that independence for Malaya was being granted by the British and not by the so-called Communist "liberators" and that Tunku Abdul Rahman had come to power after elections that were not a "British trick," was steadily borne in on the Communist guerrillas by every possible means until their will to fight was finally broken.

On the tactical side, PW was carefully tuned in to the detailed requirements of the particular tactical operation concerned. Repeated personal messages in the voices of their friends to the Branch or District leaders still in the jungle, telling them that the fight was hopeless, that the friends speaking had been fairly treated and reunited with their loved ones, sometimes

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\*This subsection has been contributed by General the Lord Bourne, GCB, CBE, CMG.

had a quick effect. Pictures of happy family reunions and promises of money rewards for bringing an automatic gun or a friend out of the jungle gradually wore down the morale of the toughest of the terrorists. In one district more than 40 CTs were persuaded to surrender in a period of eight months, although there were no troops at all in the area.

In short, political warfare played a very important part in reducing the guerrilla's will to fight. It was second only to the main weapons of food denial and the constant fear of ambush by well-trained soldiers. It was an essential weapon, and a great deal cheaper than shooting.

### Terrorism

Some idea of the scale of terrorist activity is given by the figures in the Annual Report of the Federation of Malaya for 1956. To December 31, 1955, over a time-span of 90 months, a monthly average of 26.8 civilians were killed and 14.9 wounded by the guerrillas. From a monthly average of 55 in the last half of 1950, the worst period, the figures fell sharply in the last six months of 1952 and first half-year of 1953, to 16.7 and 6.2 respectively. In the last six months of 1956 the monthly average of civilians killed was 2.

There are a number of factors involved here. The Malayan Communists gave the impression of being puzzled by the correct use of terror as a technique. They sought popular support and depended heavily upon the Chinese community. If they killed civilians, and in conformity with their earlier practice this included the torture and mutilation of women and children, would they not lose this support? They seem to have decided they would lose it and so their killing probably became highly selective; without access to Special Branch records, one cannot know.

A case in point are the nurses brought in to Malaya in the mid-1950s by the government. These women in their little Ford ambulances drove all over the countryside ministering to the Chinese community. They were absolutely defenseless, yet none was ever harmed. Another factor in the Communist dilemma was the possible reaction of the Malay community. On occasion, early in the insurrection, Malays had suffered atrocity, and Malay reprisals on the nearest Chinese had been immediate and savage. The guerrillas had strong local roots in the Chinese community and it was not impossible that such reprisals would fall on their families and friends.

Whatever the exact nature of the guerrillas' reasoning, on October 1, 1951, and in conformity with a Cominform directive the Central Committee of the Malayan Communist Party issued a directive that the Party would shift from terrorism to subversion. The directive indicates what had previously been the practice: "... burning new villages, attacking public utilities, derailing trains, throwing grenades in crowds, wounding innocent by-standers, and burning churches and ambulances." They were now to be avoided.<sup>4</sup> Corpses were not to be mutilated nor their gold teeth extracted. Given the fact that this directive had to be hand-carried by courier over Malaya, some time lag in its implementation is understandable. The civilian casualty rate in the first six months of 1952 shows little change from the preceding six months, 40.5 as against 42, but then it drops to 16.7.

It must be emphasized that the party directive noted above did not exist in a vacuum. The guerrillas were under severe military and police pressure, and the resettlement program was putting 500,000 squatters and 650,000 tappers and miners under police protection. It was therefore not as easy, physically, to kill as it had been. Even so, there remains the conclusion that the use of terror had not been profitable, for the October 1 directive was issued when the Communists were still killing civilians at the rate of 40 a month.

When terror was used as a technique, some targets do seem classifiable. The British planter and his family, the mining superintendent and his family, were obvious targets, and, indeed, were explicitly excluded from the October 1 directive. They were attacked as part of the process of taking over the countryside. By the nature of their occupation, rubber tappers were exposed. The resemblance of guerrilla tactics and banditry had been noted, and so tappers who would not submit to extortion for the Party were killed, families included. The same pressures were applied to wealthy Chinese, to Chinese shopkeepers, and so on. These were old, familiar secret-society techniques now being used for the good of the Party. The informer, the unsympathetic, were also targets.

Then there were the attempts to paralyze the economic life of the countryside, by derailing or firing on trains, holding up buses and killing their passengers, destroying rubber trees, and blowing up water pipes, electric lines, etc. Destruction of rubber trees would seem a method to which Malaya was terribly vulnerable. The guerrillas tried it and stopped. One can only assume they feared loss of popular support, i.e., food, drugs, information, recruits.

## SUPPORT FOR THE GUERRILLAS

### Local

The guerrilla movement in Malaya was 95% Chinese. A few Indians and a few Malays took part, presumably being Party members or sympathizers, or having had bandit ties. But the movement may be described as Chinese. It is not far-fetched to say that a few British civil servants, Gurkha, British, and Malayan soldiers, Malayan police and civil servants, had to deal with a Chinese insurrection. Its supporters were to be found in all classes of the Chinese community, but the key element was the 500,000 Chinese squatters living in the jungle fringe. From the beginning of the insurrection this fact was appreciated by the Federation government.

It must not be thought that the Chinese community was united in support of the guerrillas. A number of the secret societies were anti-Communist and could supply leadership in fighting for the community's allegiance. There was also widespread anti-Communist sentiment within the Chinese community. In February 1949, eight months after the Emergency began, this led to the founding of the Malayan Chinese Association. Some observers thought this was the first organization that could fairly claim to speak for the community. By mid-1949 it had about 50,000 members; by year's end, 100,000. The Communists tried to stop its early growth by terror, but failed.

### The Nature of Support

This has been indicated above; food and information were the critical items.

### Relation of Events to Support

Two events had a marked effect on the course of the insurrection. That only two can be so regarded will not seem puzzling if one reflects that the Emergency was not marked by dramatic clashes, but was rather a prolonged series of small episodes--of "contacts" in which soldiers or police acted first, and of "incidents" that the guerrillas precipitated. The first



of these events is perhaps two intimately linked happenings, the Communist victory in China in late 1949 and British recognition of Communist China in January 1950. Despite the Communist victories in China, surrenders by Communist guerrillas in Malaya were running at a good rate, with 66 such in December 1949, well above the average for the period of 28.7. Then came recognition of Communist China, and surrenders fell from 66 in December to 5 the next July, with the average for the intervening six-month period 7.5 a month. Meanwhile, the number of guerrilla-caused incidents nearly tripled. In the later opinion of the Federation government, not only were the guerrillas encouraged, but a large part of the Chinese community decided it had better, in the Federation's phrase, "insure" itself with the guerrillas lest its property and families in China suffer at the hands of the Communist government there.

The Briggs Plan of resettlement and effective command and control, and the dynamic leadership of Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, were needed to restore guerrilla surrenders to the pre-recognition rate; these surrenders would seem a good indication of guerrilla morale and popular support for the guerrillas.

The second episode was the 1953 peace in Vietnam. Following on the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, this might have been thought a blow to the Federation government. On the contrary, psychological warfare seized on the event to point out that since there was peace in Vietnam no Chinese or Communist armies would be marching south to Malaya. The surrender rate went from 24.8 the previous year to 32.5, and police and army casualties were almost cut in half.

#### Outside Support

No direct outside support, in arms or personnel, is known to have come to the Malayan guerrillas. To write this is not to exclude the occasional Party courier from People's China, but in the long run paper messages, however well phrased, are not support. Neither the Soviet Union nor China helped the guerrillas; the space-time problem may have been insoluble, while Maoist doctrine does not regard such support as essential.

There was a little support for the guerrillas from within the British Commonwealth. This was not expressed in arms, supplies, or volunteers but rather in sporadic and ineffective attempts to spread alarm and despondency, to lower morale, and to rouse public

opinion to demand an end to the use of British and Dominion armed forces in Malaya. Within Britain, anonymous telephone calls harassed the wives of senior officers.<sup>5</sup> Some sections of the London press combined criticism with defeatism. Academic figures also denounced the conduct of antiguerrilla operations in Malaya and viewed the future with deep alarm--for example, Victor Purcell, in his Malaya: Communist or Free, published in 1954.

### THE COUNTERINSURGENT RESPONSE

In beginning consideration of the counterinsurgent response it may be useful to look once again at the nature of the guerrilla movement in Malaya. It can be seen as a state of mind whose intensity, and not any statistics, is the real measure of the strength of the movement. There were three great categories of membership: the full-time uniformed guerrillas, the part-time Min Yuen, and a large number of sympathizers. These last would give money, food, and information, with more or less conviction. If their enthusiasm cooled, and if it was safe to do so, they might cut their contribution or even report the collector to the Special Branch. The Min Yuen member might become a double agent. The terrorist might defect, or become a double agent. On Home Guard duty, the wavering sympathizer might shoot to kill. If smuggling out food, he might wink at the inspector, and end up as a double agent. No good figures could be kept of the whole process, but guerrilla surrenders, guerrillas killed, and the drop in incidents would tell the story.

Measures that cut guerrillas from local support in Malaya may be divided into two classes: measures which had the unintended effect of isolating the guerrillas, and those taken with that end in view. The element of personal judgment in the grouping of items into the first class is apparent. The second class reflect the steady growth of knowledge and sophistication among those controlling and directing the counterinsurgent effort, over and above the firm grasp of some basic principles that existed from the very beginning of the Emergency.

### Measures with Unintended Result

First among these, and fundamental in importance, was the fact that the Commonwealth forces in Malaya were combat effective in the jungle. In large part, this combat effectiveness came from

their being mobile in the jungle and in no sense road-bound. This they owed to the routine use of air supply. Developed in Burma in World War II as a means of countering the Japanese tactics of encirclement, ambush, and roadblocks, air supply gave troops using it in the jungle an independence of the road net that surprised their Communist adversaries. Moreover, it greatly reduced the possibility of the latter's ambushing their opponents, for it is difficult to ambush troops who normally move off-trail and off-road.

Operating in the jungle throughout the year, patrolling and sweeping it by day, ambushing by night, the military made it impossible for the guerrillas to set up a liberated area anywhere within Malaya. Since the guerrillas could not set up a liberated area, in turn they could not appear as probable winners to enough people to set the tides of popular support moving toward them. In their most powerful years they could attract and command a good deal of support, but they could never get the band wagon rolling. Or, put in terms of their own doctrine, they could not maintain their operations at any level higher than the first stage.

Second among measures that had the unintended effect of isolating the guerrillas may be listed those aimed at rounding-up both guerrillas and sympathizers. In the early days of the Emergency the techniques of registration, detention, and cordon and search were extensively used to round up guerrillas and sympathizers as a thing too obviously good in itself to need further defense. However, in retrospect it may be suggested that one result was seriously to handicap the Min Yuen and thereby interfere with the functioning of the mechanism that was to link the guerrilla to his sources of support among the people.

Registration was begun in September 1948 and aimed to give each individual over the age of 12 a card bearing his or her photograph, thumbprint, registration number, name, sex, age, race, language, birthplace, occupation, permanent address, father's birthplace, and food ration card number (it will be recalled that food was very scarce in Malaya in the early postwar years, and so was rationed). The Communists appreciated the importance of this step and confiscated cards by the tens of thousands.

Despite this Communist reaction, completion of registration by the end of March 1949 was most helpful to soldiers and police. It was then possible to get an idea of who belonged in any given area and who did not. The most effective means of checking this was cordon and search, and the next step was detention. Cordon and search meant that with speed, surprise, and secrecy, an appropriate operational area was cordoned off by troops and police.

Its inhabitants were then checked off one by one to make sure they could be accounted for. One variation on this procedure was to pass the locals before a screened booth in which sat a police informer. He or she would then tick off individuals for further action.

This further action was most probably detention. Declaring a state of emergency in June 1948 empowered the Federation government to order anyone to be detained without trial for up to one year. By the end of 1948, 5,097 had been so removed. Treatment in the detention camps aimed at converting the detainees into loyal and active supporters of government. Later informed opinion thought the venture a success, noting that some of the camps even had associations of graduates.<sup>6</sup> The great drawback to this and other measures was cost. In the early years of the Emergency, until the Korean War sent up the price of tin, sheer lack of money to take measures was a real constraint.

Founding of the Malayan Chinese Association, mentioned above, probably should be classed among measures consciously intended to separate the guerrillas from the people. Anything that offered rival leadership to the Malayan Communist Party, anything that tended to end the isolation of the Chinese from other communities, acted to cut the guerrillas from the people. This organization was sufficiently sophisticated in concept and in action to suggest that its organizers saw it as a move toward isolating the guerrilla. It offered a legal, peaceful avenue for the expression of Chinese wishes and the redress of Chinese grievances.

#### Measures with Intended Results

The first place among measures taken with the intended result of isolating the guerrilla, because of its fundamental importance as a technique in affecting the course of the Emergency is resettlement of Chinese squatters, together with the regrouping of plantation and mine labor. As noted above, the principal source of support for the guerrillas in food, information, and recruits was the 500,000 Chinese squatters. Living in their own small villages along the jungle's edge, they were outside the public administration of Malaya. Even assuming the language barrier could somehow have been broken, there were still no police at hand to receive information, to observe, or to protect. Absent too were all the functionaries, all the services, that make up public administration, and which it would be tedious to list. The squatters were a society, but independent of Malaya. This was an opportunity which the guerrillas exploited.

The functional relationship of the squatters to the guerrillas was appreciated as the Emergency was being declared. As early as September 1948 resettling the squatters into villages that could be policed and administered had been recommended to the several Malayan states, but nothing was done until 1950. The delay is regarded by one student as having resulted from simple unwillingness of the Federation government to underwrite resettlement. The several Malay states did not have the money; the Federation government's proposals were highly unrealistic. Their justification, that land title was involved, and that land was a state matter, in retrospect shows a curious perspective.

By March 1950 the worsening of the Emergency since the decision to recognize Communist China had brought a new feeling of urgency and a new willingness to take bold measures. Among these was the decision to bring a retired general officer, Sir Harold Briggs, to Malaya to take over the new post of Director of Operations (as a civilian, in order to meet what then seemed constitutional requirements). As noted above, resettlement was an old idea, as was also that of a network of committees to direct the antiguerrilla effort. Briggs quickly combined the two into what was at once dubbed "The Briggs Plan," but it is resettlement that concerns us here.

An official publication of the Federation of Malaya wrote that the Briggs Plan had four aims: (1) to dominate the populated areas and to build up a feeling of complete security which would in time result in a steady and increasing flow of information from all sources; (2) to break up the Communist organization within the populated areas; (3) to isolate the bandits from their food and supply organizations in the populated areas; and (4) to destroy the bandits by forcing them to attack the security forces on their own grounds.

In resettling, the squatters would be placed in new villages. These would be within barbed-wire fences to control traffic, surrounded by a clear circle that would be flood-lit at night, and guarded by police posts. It must be emphasized that these were in no sense defended villages as known in Vietnam. The wire was a fence, intended only to force the guerrillas into an observable effort to pass it. The police force would control traffic, watch the fence, and give the alarm if there were a major guerrilla effort. The safeguard against that major guerrilla effort was the continual aggressive patrolling of the army within the jungle to spot and break up concentrations, the nightly army and police ambushes along trails that led to the villages, and the Special Branch intelligence to give early warning of any such guerrilla plans.

Money for resettlement was made easier to find by the Korean War. Beginning in June 1950 it raised the price of tin. Malaya, in large part, finances itself by export duties on tin. Revenues therefore increased sharply, and the program could be carried out without any need for deficit financing; indeed, in those years the Federation had a budgetary surplus.

In carrying out the program, the Federation was careful to respect the needs of the settlers. First may be mentioned land provision. Land was bought at market prices, of from \$200 to \$330 an acre, and resold to the settler for \$4 to \$5 an acre. Each settler thus received a plot of 1/6 acre within the new village for his house and garden, and a three-acre farm within a two-mile walk. He received aluminum roofing for the new house, about \$20 in cash, and a subsistence allowance for six months.

In most cases, notice was given, but if necessary the physical movement of the settlers was conducted as a military operation, with surprise and speed. Medical and administrative teams were present. What could not be moved by truck was appraised and paid for on the spot. Police screened everyone, as a first step toward weeding out the Min Yuen. The soldiers showed every kindness, by carrying babies and parcels, helping the old, and providing gallons of tea.

Once the village was set up, then General Briggs had what was called an "after care" program, for it must be recalled that the goal was a viable village complete with the amenities. The "after care" program supplied schools, clinics, community centers, Boy Scouts, agricultural agents, and similar services. In all, there were 480 new villages.<sup>8</sup>

The central administrative figure was the resettlement officer. The original plan was to provide a Chinese-speaking Britisher with a Chinese assistant. As soon as the latter was qualified, he was to take over. Even though the Forestry, Game, and Mine and Survey Departments of the Federation almost closed down, not enough such Britishers could be provided. However, one result of the Communist take-over in China was to drive out numbers of British missionaries. Many of these in turn offered to act as resettlement officers. Malayan Chinese assistants were thought to be, in many cases, members of anti-Communist secret societies.

Any given new village was thought a success when its people began to inform on the guerrillas.

Success for the program would be found in the opportunity it would give to cut the movement of food, recruits, and information

from the villagers to the guerrillas. Traffic had to pass through the gates, and here was the chance to search people, vehicles, and packages. At night, the fences could be watched and patrolled. Paths leading to the villages, which were the guerrilla LOCs were ambushed.

As regards rubber estate and mine personnel, these were in almost all cases already provided with estate housing, so that what was done was in most cases to provide fences, floodlights, and police, and in some cases actually regroup the people. Once this was done, the remarks above apply.

The cost of the resettlement program was:

1950	\$ 2,310,000
1951	11,220,000
1952	6,270,000

Federation-wide food control accompanied resettlement. Foods, drugs, and publication supplies (e.g., paper and inks) were declared restricted articles. They could not be moved by truck between 7 P.M. and 6 A.M. Trucks en route could not stop on the road, could not depart from their courses, could only unload at their destinations. Manifests had to be carried. Private cars could be stopped and inspected. Buses, cars, and trucks could be checked at control points and had to undergo surprise spot checks.

By 1952, resettlement and food control were combined into an operational concept which in turn led to the food-denial operation, perhaps the most effective single operational concept of the Malayan Emergency.

After weeks of secret planning and rehearsals, and without previous warning, a selected area would be declared a food-denial area. Soldiers would surround the area with roving patrols, ambushes, and check points. The rice ration would be cut, and teams of police and administrators would move from house to house searching for supplies of rice. When found, all above the allowable stock would be purchased on the spot. All people entering or leaving the village would be searched by male or female search personnel as required. The guerrillas would be ingenious in their devices; the police had to be equally perceptive and ingenious. Attempts at smuggling drew jail sentences.

Central cooking of rice, introduced in the mid-1950s, was a great improvement in food denial. It exploited the fact that



cooked rice quickly spoils in jungle heat. Consequently, kitchens were set up in the food-denial area in which all rice was cooked for all people and from which rations had to be drawn. In one operation, 26,000 meals a day were so provided.

The guerrillas' counter to this was to hope that their rations would see them through. In general, they seemed able to stock no more than six to eight weeks' supply. When this was gone, they had to run increasingly desperate risks to get rice and were then most vulnerable to ambush. Jungle gardens were no answer because they could easily be spotted from the air and were then either defoliated by chemical means or exploited as ambush bait.

An example of the food-denial operation was APOLLO, whose mission was to destroy the guerrilla organization in the Kuala Lipis west district. Lasting from June 1954 to January 1955, it required a battalion of infantry, 18 police area security units (a platoon each), several groups of reformed guerrillas (two or three more platoons), and some Home Guards. By December 31, 1954, there were 32 kills and 31 surrenders. In early 1955 the guerrillas were judged to have been eliminated, and all restrictions on civilian life were ended, i.e., Kuala Lipis was declared a "white area."

Describing the device of the "white area" may serve as a transition to the topic of psychological warfare. If a geographic entity showed a steadily dropping level of guerrilla incidents that gave promise of approaching the nuisance level, the Federation government might tell its people that if there were no incidents, restrictions on the movement of people and goods, such as curfews, would be removed and kept off so long as this incident-free state was maintained. One way for the inhabitants of an area to keep their neighborhood incident-free was by reporting unusual events and suspicious people to the police, and by the mid-1950s the people of Malaya were well aware of this. Consequently proclamation and later maintenance of a "white area" would demonstrate that in it the guerrillas had been isolated from the people and could no longer shelter among them. Deprived of food, information, and security, they were in a hopeless position that could only be resolved by flight, surrender, or death. The last, it may be surmised, would result from information given by a defector, by one of the people of the area, or in an ambush as the guerrilla desperately sought food. By the late 1950s, area after area of Malaya was being proclaimed "white."

Propaganda activity to separate the guerrilla from the people began in Malaya almost immediately after the Emergency was declared. It will be remembered this was June 1948, and with war-time experience the importance of public relations and psychological warfare was still fresh in the minds of senior personnel within the Federation. Interestingly, the term psychological warfare was not used until 1950. Until that date, the term was public relations.

Initially, in 1948, the physical dimensions of the effort were modest. In the last six months of 1948, 30,000,000 leaflets and 540,000 copies of simple, vernacular newspapers were distributed, in a nation of some 4,000,000. Twelve public-address trucks were used. In the years 1948-1950, experience led to a distinction between public relations, directed at the people, and psychological warfare, directed at the guerrilla. It is primarily with the former that this paper is concerned.

The mechanical devices used in public relations stayed the same through the years, but the scale broadened. Initially, there were but 12 public-address trucks for the whole Federation. By 1951, there were 63, one for each governmental district, and in 1953 there were 90. They were then estimated to be reaching 1,000,000 people a month. Radios were put into outlying villages in 1951, some 500 of them. By December 1953 there were 946, with an estimated 97% always operable.

The publication program had come a long way by 1953 from the half million or so newspapers of 1948. There was now a Tamil weekly (for the South Indians), a Malay weekly, and two Chinese monthlies, over and above booklets and leaflets. These publications went to 105,361 addresses. Here then were ample means for telling the people of Malaya. What they were told was something else, and of fundamental importance.

Several themes may be seen in the words and acts of the Federation of Malaya and of the government of the United Kingdom, though without access to official records one cannot know how much is a pattern that is clearer in retrospect than it was at the time. These themes are independence, progress, and victory. Together they were a potent message and with daily demonstration were able to outdo Communist propaganda, thus removing popular support from the guerrillas.

The steps toward independence, each highly publicized, may be quickly listed in chronological order:

March 1951--Each of the 11 departments of government was placed under a responsible minister, a member of the Legislative Council.

February 1952--On becoming High Commissioner and Director of Operations, Field Marshal Sir Gerald W.R. Templer proclaimed that in due course Malaya would become a self-governing nation, with a common citizenship (i.e., for both Malays and Chinese).

May 1952--Elected village councils were introduced. Civil service posts were opened to Chinese.

September 1952--1,100,000 Chinese were given full citizenship.

April 1954--An elected Legislative Council was announced.

December 1954--Lord Bourne, as Director of Operations, introduced Malay, Chinese, and Malayan leaders as members of State and District War Executive Committees. Leading politicians were also placed on the Director of Operations' Committee (at the top of the organizational pyramid).

July 1955--The first general election with universal franchise was held.

November 1955--It was announced that Emergency at the current level was no bar to independence.

January/February 1956--London conference on transfer of power was held.

August 1957--Malaya independence was proclaimed.

These successive steps toward independence, together with the pressure of military and police measures, resettlement, and similar measures, had their effect on the Malayan Communist Party, which found its propaganda being steadily undercut. Consequently, in June 1955 it offered to negotiate a settlement. The offer was refused. In September 1955, the government offered an amnesty to surrendering Communists. The offer was markedly unsuccessful, but three months later, in December, the Communists again sought talks. The government of Malaya, then under Tunku Abdul Rahman (and note that independence had been promised the month before), would not amnesty common-law crimes, and in effect demanded

unconditional surrender. The government would not negotiate its terms, and the talks, held at Baling and involving the Communist leader Chin Peng, lasted only two days.

There was also steady activity in the field of social reform, introducing into Malaya the social gains which the working class in Europe and North America had won long before: rates, terms, and contracts of money-lending were controlled; the government undertook to provide land for Indian farm laborers; the number of cooperatives jumped from 18 in January 1951 to 174 in May of 1952; hours of shop labor were controlled; employment exchanges were opened; water was piped to Malay villages, as part of a vast irrigation and reclamation scheme; labor unions grew rapidly with government favor and encouragement.

In the field of government itself, careers in civil service were opened to clever people who might not have university degrees. Several dozen young Malaysians were posted to Sandhurst. Other young Malaysians were seconded to British legations and embassies as the start of a foreign service. Careers thus were opened to talent.

Behind this bustle of activity must be imagined the patient diplomacy of senior British and Malay officers, civil and military, persuading the sultans and their chief ministers, persuading the great Chinese merchants, smoothing over rough spots, coping with the inevitable emergencies, and as it were oiling the gears of progress.

Always after 1952 they could point to a third theme beyond independence and progress, and this was victory. In the Emergency there were no battles, but rather a steady succession of small-unit encounters, and these recorded a steady wearing down of the guerrillas. This wearing down must be taken as the result of the efforts to cut local support.

#### ADEQUACY OF GENERAL AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY

##### General Machinery

At the beginning of the Emergency there was on hand in Malaya the overall structure of government. There were the departments of government, the Malay states, etc., but there were grave weaknesses.

Because of the recent Japanese occupation an appreciable number of civil servants had been killed or made invalids and had not been replaced. Many departments were under establishment strength. As noted before, the state of the police was especially bad. They were 2,000 understrength and had only a few hundred men who spoke Chinese. There was a cleavage between civil servants who had left to continue the fight and others who had stayed and suffered.

The Federation government of 1948 was a new structure. Its organization had not yet shaken down. No one quite knew how the constitution would operate.

Organization to conduct counterinsurgency was inadequate. Initially, general charge of matters relating to the Emergency was given to a senior civil servant, the Chief Secretary of the Federation. Conduct of operations was nominally entrusted to the Commissioner of Police, W.N. Grey. Mr. Grey had been Commissioner of Police in Palestine when it was under British mandate and had had experience in guerrilla war. It seems to have been thought that he would give a lead to the military and show them what to do and how to do it.

In practice, this vague organization with undefined powers did not yield results. Coordination of effort between police and military was absent. Grey could not give orders to the military when their support was needed; the military did not get intelligence from the police. Thanks to the organizational habits of the English-speaking peoples, a pyramid of committees with military, police, and civil membership sprang up but with no procedure, no chain of command, no organizational relationship. They and the direction of the counterinsurgency just floundered until the arrival of General Briggs in April 1950 and the institution of the Briggs Plan.

#### Local Administrative Machinery

As noted above, the 500,000 Chinese squatters were outside administration. Once they had been grouped into the 480 new villages, they and the rest of Malaya were squarely under an effective, disciplined, honest, and responsive local administration, with all that it implies.

### Control and Direction after Briggs and Templer

Briggs introduced the distinctive system of War Executive Committees. At every level of government, from the Federation down to the lowest police unit, there was an executive committee of police, military, and civil official, with the civilian in the chair. The committee was supported by an operations room (comparable to the familiar S2/S3 setup) and gave orders, actual operational orders, sometimes in regular 5-paragraph form, to all military and police within its boundaries.

At the Federation level, the highest level, was the Director of Operations' Committee (called the Emergency Operations Council when Tunku Abdul Rahman became its chairman), which issued twice-yearly directives. Conduct of operations was very largely in the hands of the State and District War Executive Committee (DWEG). The State Committee (Malay chief minister, infantry brigadier, British adviser, senior police officer, State Secretary for Chinese Affairs, and so forth) would lay down directives. Day-to-day work was done by the DWEG. This would be the district officer--that is, the senior civil servant of each of the 63 districts into which Malaya was divided--the senior police officer of what was locally called a police circle, and the senior soldier (a battalion commander sometimes, perhaps his adjutant, perhaps a company commander; normally, a battalion covered several districts). These three ran the food-denial operations, proposed and executed civic action projects, did the work of the Emergency. Their operations room fulfilled the functions of a battalion headquarters in combat and also provided a meeting place for civil and military, police and battalion staff.

At the lowest level of all, the company commander put his CP next to the police station, and with the police ran a joint operations room.

Though Briggs set up the system, it did not work with full efficiency until Templer took over. Briggs was only Director of Operations and did not have the power to touch the internal organization of either army or police, to say nothing of the several departments of government. Templer took over as both High Commissioner and Director of Operations, and so there was no departmental playing-off of military against civil. The posts were split again under his successors but by then lessons had been learned and habits formed. Templer also enjoyed the explicit full support of the then new Churchill Cabinet, so that personnel and equipment came pouring out in a flood his predecessors could only wish for.

### The Police

As noted, when the Emergency began the police were undermanned and lacked vital language skills. Their importance was recognized at once, and their numbers (quality was another matter) increased at once. Special constables were recruited for point defense on mines and plantations, and auxiliary police were recruited as part-time volunteers to supplement the efforts of the professionals. When Templer took over, he began a most rigorous training program to turn the police into an elite professional force. This in turn made possible a sharp drop in the numbers of the police: (data as of 31 December)

	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Auxiliary</u>	<u>Specials</u>
1948	16,459	16,966	28,719
1949	17,871	46,673	30,000
1950	16,040	68,172	34,053
1951	26,154	99,000	39,870
1952	27,729	3,041	41,312
1953	26,033	-	32,481
*	*	*	*
1956	19,971	-	24,018

It should be noted that as of 1951, only 5,000 regular police were on full-time counterinsurgent duty. This figure slowly decreased thereafter.

The military, therefore, did not have to act as police. On the contrary, in 1949 there were formed 235 police jungle squads. They were volunteers from all races and communities, both regular police and special constables. Each squad was in effect a rifle platoon, armed as such. They performed normal infantry missions of jungle war. An expedient, they decreased in numbers with the increasing mastery of police and army over the guerrillas.

As important as the provision of an adequate number of professionally qualified police was a division of function between military and police that was not merely workable but also a positive contribution toward isolating the guerrilla. This was, first, the decision that intelligence was to be the sole responsibility of the Police Special Branch and, second, the decision that the police were primarily responsible for controlling the movement of people and goods.



The first decision meant that though troops would of course continue to gather information, its processing into intelligence was the responsibility of the police, who were also solely responsible for its gathering by clandestine means. The second decision meant that physically cutting the links between the people and the guerrillas fell in larger measure on the police. Not only would Special Branch identify the links, but the police were primarily responsible for watching the gates of new villages, checking people and parcels, spot checks of vehicles, routine traffic checks, and the other myriad details of controlling the movement of people and goods. In the event of a food-denial operation, when these procedures were carried out with the most ingenious and complete thoroughness, the police effort would be reinforced by soldiers detailed for that purpose, but it would remain a police effort.

It should be noted that the two police missions described above were mutually supporting. Checking the movement of goods and people supplied information on the guerrillas; Special Branch intelligence made it easier to perform these checks.<sup>9</sup>

#### Determination as Related to Indoctrination

Battalions posted to Malaya, after the haste of the early days, were put through instruction in desired behavior. They were instructed in local customs, and the importance of winning the hearts and minds of the people was thoroughly stressed. One battalion commander told the writer that when on one occasion one of his men got into a fight with a Chinese villager, his mates had apologized to the villager, given him a cash collection, and beaten up the offender, all before the matter reached the commander's desk. It should also be noted that the Malay soldier saw himself as defending his country and people, that the Gurkha was a long-term professional, and that the British soldier who had been sent to Malaya gave the impression of enjoying jungle service as a welcome change from army routine.

Troop morale was also sustained by professional competence. When the Emergency began in 1948 it was possible to commit battalions with recent experience of jungle war in Burma. Thereafter, both unit and individual training were conducted for all units and for key personnel at the Jungle Warfare Training Center at Kota Tinggi. With the steady growth of the Malay Regiment, British officers and noncommissioned officers were given thorough

and intensive language courses before they joined their units.<sup>10</sup> The combat effectiveness displayed by the Commonwealth forces against the Communist terrorists would indicate that this training accomplished its mission.

#### Moral and Ethical Attitudes

The government forces in Malaya were at great pains to be able to contrast their moral and ethical attitudes to those of the Communists. Torture was unknown. Teams of Surrendered Enemy Personnel were formed to tour the villages and put on skits mocking the Communists. Since the latter told their people they would be tortured if they surrendered this had a most salutary effect on the surrender rate and also undermined the credibility of the Communist leadership.

In their dealings with the several communities of Malaya the soldiers and police were carefully controlled. Anything confiscated was paid for at once. Any searching of women was done privately, by women. No captured guerrilla was executed save for common-law crimes and then after trial by jury. Executions in fact were rare, and no surrendered guerrilla, whatever his past, was executed. The government made it easy to surrender, hard to fight.

Government, soldiers, and police were honest. While graft and corruption may be assumed to have existed, they did not interfere with operations.

Discipline and morale were excellent throughout the Emergency. Units fought well whatever the odds and never hesitated to act aggressively. There was a steadily growing consciousness of their superiority to the guerrilla.

#### Outcome of the Insurrection

The outcome was a success for the government. Following mass surrenders by the guerrillas in 1958 and 1959, guerrilla activity so diminished that in 1960 the government could proclaim an end to the Emergency. What remained of the guerrillas took refuge in Thailand, from which to date they have been no more than a border nuisance.

## CONCLUSIONS

Isolating the full-time guerrilla from food, information, and recruits is a most effective way of reducing insurgency to a level less than a primarily military problem. Food is perhaps the guerrilla's most vulnerable spot in that he cannot reduce his intake below a certain level. If he must make food his primary concern, his combat efficiency suffers accordingly. Much of his time must be devoted to raising, or procuring, or transporting food. These activities are incompatible with wide-ranging mobility or ambitious military plans.

The techniques used in Malaya to isolate guerrillas require effective local administration and police. They demand patient attention to detail, persistence, and honesty. Such an administration is, however, well able to deal with the guerrilla when he has been reduced from a military to a police problem. It is probable that such an administration also requires a stable, progressive economic base to provide and to support the administrators and police. Providing or moving toward such a base also acts to remove the deeper causes of guerrilla war.

Isolating the guerrilla cannot be undertaken apart from the broader aspects of counterinsurgency. "The lawful government of a country, in addition to operating its security forces (army, air force, and police) with intelligence and efficiency, must at the same time govern in a way demonstrably superior to that offered by the insurgents. If this is not done, no amount of force will ensure victory."<sup>11</sup> A competent, honest, capable administration will find that moves to isolate the guerrilla are a most powerful and effective technique in counterinsurgency, serving to pull other, subordinate techniques, e.g., personal registration, into a mutually supporting complex working toward the goal of cutting the guerrilla from his support within the society.

## Footnotes

1. Frank N. Trager, ed., Marxism in Southeast Asia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 266.
2. General the Lord Bourne and Major General Frank H. Brooke, "Comments on Sunderland Ms.," hereafter cited as Bourne and Brooke, Comments.
3. Bourne and Brooke, Comments.
4. Riley Sunderland, Ms, "The Communist Defeat in Malaya," The RAND Corporation D-9803-ARPA, p. VI-13.  
Bourne and Brooke, Comments.
5. Interview, R. Sunderland with Major General Frank H. Brooke, CB, CBE, DSO, May 1965.
6. Bourne and Brooke, Comments.
7. Kernial Singh Sandhu, "The Saga of the 'Squatter' in Malaya," Journal of Southeast Asian History, March 1964, p. 155.
8. Sandhu, op. cit.
9. Bourne and Brooke, Comments.
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11. Bourne and Brooke, Comments.

## Bibliography

Save as otherwise noted, the material in this study is taken from an unclassified RAND Corporation manuscript, Riley Sunderland, "The Communist Defeat in Malaya," D-9803-ARPA.

Of the sources consulted in writing this manuscript, the most useful were:

Annual Reports, Federation of Malaya, 1948-1956.

The series ended with Malayan independence. Although official publications, and contemporary, they are candid, and contain a great variety of useful information.

Henniker, Brigadier M.C.A. Red Star Over Malaya. Edinburgh and London, 1955.

Miers, Brigadier Richard. Shoot to Kill. London, 1959.

Robinson, J.B. Perry. Transformation in Malaya. London, 1956.  
This was written by the man who catalogued the files of the Federation of Malaya in preparation for the writing of an official history, and so had a singular opportunity to know of what happened behind the scenes.

Most of the books consulted were published in the middle or early 1950s. Little has been published in the later years. However, so far as is known, the techniques as described in this study did not change appreciably in the latter years of the Emergency.

Recently published, and drawing upon official sources, is a most interesting study of resettlement:

Sandhu, Kernial Singh. "The Saga of the 'Squatter' in Malaya," Journal of Southeast Asia History. March 1964.

## Guerrilla Operations in South Korea, 1945-1953

by

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and

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### KOREAN BACKGROUND AND TERRAIN

Korea has three neighbors--China, Russia, and Japan. At any one given time in the last 200 years, the odds are that two of the three were great powers. All are stronger than Korea, all are rivals, and each sees advantage to itself in dominating Korea. Korea, thus, is a buffer state. During most of this period, China, which has the longest land border with Korea and has had a polity and a society which have been markedly absorptive, has been the dominant power as far as Korea is concerned, but Russian and Japanese rivalry have been keen. From the Russo-Japanese War to 1945, Korea was Japanese. Since 1917, the several forms of Korean communism have been in the service of Russian and Chinese policies.

Geographically, Korea is a peninsula. To the north, it has China along its border for about 250 miles and the Soviet Union for 11. It is 600 miles long at the farthest point, but its hourglass waist is only some 90 miles across. In all, its area is 85,000 square miles. There is a hot, damp summer with a monsoon season, followed by bitterly cold winters. The topography is mountainous. A major mountain chain runs down the eastern side of the peninsula and its spurs dominate the rest of the land. Only 20% of Korea is arable, and most of this is in the south and west along the coastlines and river bottoms. In South Korea this arable land is among the most heavily populated spots in the world, while the barren uplands have few settlers. There are no wide alluvial plains, so Korea is a land of mountains, ridge lines, mountain valleys, rather narrow river valleys, and narrow coastal plains. There has been some deforestation. The major crop is rice.

## KOREAN PARTITION

After Japan's surrender a line was drawn across Korea at the 38th parallel to divide the Soviet and American zones of what the Americans believed would be a brief joint occupation before the creation of a Korean government. The line corresponded to no economic or geographic reality. The Soviet Union then proceeded to create a Communist People's Republic north of the line. This puppet regime in turn furnished leadership, guidance, training, personnel, propaganda, sanctuary, and supplies for a Communist guerrilla effort in the southern Republic of Korea.

## NATURE OF THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT

### Political and Social Antecedents

Though some sources claim that the Japanese virtually eliminated communism, the strength of the Party in the Republic of Korea as of 1948, estimated at 140,000 of whom 20,000 were activists, and its creation of a guerrilla force of 5,000, would suggest that Japanese success should not be appraised too generously. Infiltration from North Korea was also most important. And the Communists were helped with their recruiting and propaganda by the economic distress that followed the separation of agricultural South Korea from the industrial North, the loss of Japanese markets, Korean national desires for unity and perhaps for affiliation with a forceful, dynamic, new political movement, whose self-assured power was markedly evident to the north.

In social origin, captured guerrillas were: workers and artisans, 40%; students, 20%; peasants, 28-30%; ex-municipal employees, 5%; ex-police or provincial employees, 5-7%. The preponderance of workers and students is noteworthy and suggests that the guerrillas did not have their roots in the South Korean countryside.

### Political and Military Structure

Communist and guerrilla organizational practices were such that the two structures cannot be discussed independently. Fragmentary evidence available in open sources suggests that before the 1950 invasion, the South Korean Labor Party--the Communist



cover organization--was organized in a cell or committee structure of which some groups were overtly acting as guerrillas, while others were concerned with propaganda, recruitment, espionage, and comparable activities, and both types were under the Party's Central Committee. The structure was pyramidal, with county and town committees under province committees. It must be noted that the same higher echelon controlled both guerrilla and less violent Party activities.

After the shock to the Communist plans of the Inchon landing and the violent repulse of the invasion, the Communist structure in South Korea was rationalized. A guerrilla guidance bureau was set up directly under Kim Il-sung, the North Korean Communist leader. The chain of command passed down through three lower echelons (for military and political liaison). The lowest of these, Southern Corps Division /sic/, located in North Korea, was intended to have under it six numbered branch units. Of these six, only numbers 4 and 5 succeeded in becoming operational.

Each at its formation had immediately below it an area command, which in turn controlled several (three each in February 1952) so-called divisions. Divisions in turn had varying numbers of units denominated regiments. As operations continued, and in a manner very reminiscent of the Imperial Japanese army in World War II, unit names changed and would at different times be numbers, or a leader's name, or a slogan, or an area. Unit strengths varied widely with the fortunes of war.

Missions suggest the mixed politico-military activity of the guerrilla:

<u>Political</u>	<u>Military</u>
1. Strengthen Party cells	1. Divert UN forces
2. Propagandize	2. Destroy materiel
3. Undermine the government	3. Gather intelligence
4. Spread hatred of UN forces	4. Interdict LOCs
5. Weaken government controls	5. Attack rear area installations
6. Infiltrate the government and its services	

In any given unit, the second in command was usually the political officer, or political commissar. Troop indoctrination, propaganda, and Party policy were his particular responsibilities. Independently of the military leader, he kept in touch with the

Party structure, and so exercised great, occasionally decisive, independent authority. This arrangement is Russian, not Chinese. Immediately below him were guerrilla officers who were specialists in agitation and propaganda and charged with control of those phases of guerrilla activities.

On the ground, the guerrillas were very largely concentrated in the mountain ranges of Cholla and Kyongsang provinces in southwest Korea, as shown by a UN intelligence report of December 1951:

<u>Area</u>	<u>Armed</u>	<u>Unarmed</u>	<u>Total</u>
Southwest Korea	3,179	2,556	5,735
Taebak San	110	50	160
Pusan area	90	60	150
Cheju-do	35	30	65
	3,414	2,696	6,110

Available sources are neither clear nor satisfactory, but they indicate that, at least during the period of their greatest effectiveness, the guerrillas were a heterogeneous force among whom four types of personnel can be identified:

1. The trained, dedicated full-time Communist. These furnished leadership and were the most reliable fighting men and terrorists.
2. A varying number of locals who were sympathetic to the guerrillas and who acted in a variety of roles, for example, as part-time fighters, agents, porters, scouts, and lookouts.
3. Bandits of no fixed political conviction. Banditry had long been endemic in certain parts of Korea under the Japanese occupation, and the bandits, much as they had in China and Malaya, joined forces with the Communists.
4. Women and children. Women might be in category 1 above or with their children might be the families of men in categories 2 and 3. They would, with their children, provide various services of intelligence, security, and logistics.

#### Doctrin , Training, and Indoctrination

The doctrine, training, and indoctrination of the guerrillas were Soviet Russian, not Chinese Communist. Chinese Communist

training seems to have been confined to those Korean soldiers serving in the Chinese Communist forces who had been transferred to the North Korean army to prepare it for the invasion. The Soviets, on the other hand, seem to have spent years in training Korean Communists to return to their homeland and there re-enact the role of Soviet partisans in the Russian civil war. Whether the Russian experience was mechanically transferable probably was not questioned, since this was the Stalin period of rigid central control and adulation of all things Russian.

Prior to the June invasion, a systematic training program for guerrillas was carried on in North Korea at a school just outside Pyongyang. Conducted by the North Korean army, it operated on a fairly large scale. Some of the students were from the north, but most were from below the 38th parallel. They had been recruited by the Korean Labor Party, smuggled across the border, then after graduation had made their way back across what seems to have been a poorly guarded frontier. At least 1,000 returned before the invasion, and the number may have been twice that. This in turn would imply that, at a minimum, from one-seventh to two-sevenths of the guerrillas' preinvasion strength were trained cadre.

The general pattern of Communist guerrilla activity in South Korea, which suggests something of doctrine, was one of raids launched from mountainous areas. These latter were strongholds which the guerrillas would fight to defend. Thus, bands of men of largely urban origin based themselves in mountain areas, put their agents in the countryside, drew supplies and information from the countryside, and raided in and through it. Notably, however, they did not shelter in the villages but in the mountains.

The language of the guerrilla directives shows them as aiming to weaken government by (1) infiltrating their members into the bureaucracy, army, and police, and (2) concurrently creating such turmoil that significant numbers of soldiers would have to be sent to deal with them. Infiltration was to help with espionage, sabotage, and intelligence, and would help create the proper atmosphere for interdiction of communication lines, assassinations, kidnappings, hold-ups, and raids on sensitive points. Meanwhile, work would proceed on building both the Party and the guerrilla force itself.

### Guerrilla Logistics

Logistics was emphatically a weak point and represented a never-solved problem. At no time did the guerrillas have weapons for more than half their strength. Further, their practice of basing themselves in the mountains meant that food was a constant problem to them, and a great deal of planning and physical effort had to be devoted to the collection, transport, and distribution of food and clothing. Guerrillas so occupied cannot simultaneously engage in large-scale operations against their opponents, and the combat effectiveness of the guerrillas dropped accordingly. Moreover, the need for a steady flow of people carrying food from the villages into the mountains forced the guerrillas to establish a line of communications that in the event proved subject to interdiction.

### Political Objectives

The guerrilla objective was to support Soviet and Communist designs to reunite Korea, under Communist rule. Their methods were not only political infiltration and propaganda, but inculcation of terror and weakening of resistance by military means.

### Military Objectives

These may perhaps be divisible into objectives before and after the invasion of June 1950. Before the invasion, the military objective apparently was to create a force that could play an appreciable part in supporting invasion. For the rest, the Communist leadership in North Korea would probably be guided by events. The guerrilla emphasis would be on preparation.

After the invasion, the military objective was to weaken the South Korean defenders so as to assist in their military defeat. In the summer of 1950, events moved so fast that the guerrillas did not affect them. When after Chinese intervention the line was again stabilized across the peninsula, the opportunity to attack the rear of the UN forces was there, and the ambitious plans to establish six branch units, each in turn commanding several units named divisions, suggest that the North Korean leadership aimed at a major guerrilla effort. The ultimate military targets of this effort were to be UN lines of communication and rear area installations. The immediate targets were the

civilian population within striking distance of the guerrilla mountain strongholds, presumably to reinforce the carrot of political agitation with the stick of terror.

### Geographic Objectives

It seems probable that before the North Korean invasion the North Korean guerrilla objective was the establishment of an operational base in southwest Korea. During the summer months of 1950, this was successfully accomplished. The guerrilla force in being moved out from this base in close cooperation with the North Korean army, to help the invasion as its operational needs indicated, e.g., by interdiction of UN and ROK lines of communication, intelligence, reconnaissance, and security. After the Inchon landing and the break-out from the Pusan perimeter, the mission of maintaining the preinvasion base area reasserted its importance. The initial success in attaining this geographic objective gave elements of the North Korean forces, which had been by-passed or ordered to remain, a haven in which to join with existing guerrilla forces. By November 1950, the total from these two sources was estimated at 40,000, in contrast to the estimated 7,000 of June.

### Guerrilla Techniques

#### Military Action

The fundamental guerrilla military technique was to exist as an organized force with the capability of offensive military action. That is, the first task was to create and maintain a force in South Korea. To do so required solving the problems of recruiting, supply, intelligence, and security. Forced enrollment and persuasion were combined, and bases were created in the mountains. The force was to avoid open combat and, by undertaking widely scattered guerrilla raids in classic pattern, force the widest possible dispersion of UN forces. In such offensive operations, the guerrillas were directed to (1) infiltrate army and police units for espionage, agitation, sabotage, and terrorism; (2) secure funds by robberies; (3) kidnap or assassinate political opponents; (4) create mass unrest by agitation; (5) interdict railroads, telephones, and telegraph lines; (6) gather intelligence by aggressive small-unit action against enemy soldiers and policemen; and (7) attack air bases, ROK offices, police stations, and supply installations.

The guerrillas made a number of attacks against numerically inferior government forces, with the police a preferred target. In such operations, they tended to simulate frontal attacks while moving quickly to envelop the flanks. These attacks would be followed by a quick dispersal and reassembly in the base areas.

Despite the language of the basic directives, with their clear bent toward harassment of the UN forces, a great deal of guerrilla activity, under whatever pretext, was directed at civilians. This took the form of robbing travellers, robbing homes of food and clothing, and kidnapping. To the extent that the initial response of countryfolk to the presence of soldiers was one of cowed, silent silence, these techniques were successful, but they are far removed from Maoist teachings of the proper relation of the guerrilla to the people.

There was surprisingly little destruction of railroad right of way. Isolated unguarded bridges were rarely attacked. When railroads were attacked, in eight of ten cases it was by ambush of trains rather than by damage to rights of way. There was occasional sabotage of Korean military vehicles.

#### Political Warfare and Terrorism

The physical volume of the guerrillas' propaganda was impressive. Newspapers, leaflets, handbills, and posters were found all over South Korea. Because their strongholds were in well-timbered mountain areas, the guerrillas were able to make their own paper.

Propaganda of the deed was stressed in guerrilla training literature. The guerrillas were urged to act so that they would never be underrated and so that people would realize that they existed despite government countermeasures, that they could recognize opposition (or "traitors") among the population, and that they could act and retaliate.

In action, propaganda of the deed included kidnapping civilians, keeping them for a while, then returning them unharmed; assassination; burning the homes of actual or assumed opponents; industrial sabotage; and the operation of public kitchens. Of these acts, arson was surprisingly common and widespread, while guerrilla public kitchens were rare.

Staging some variety of incident immediately after a governmental antiguerrilla operation was habitual and was designed to show the public that the government's efforts were ineffective and that the guerrillas were still a force to be reckoned with.

If propaganda by word and deed was an important guerrilla technique of political warfare, another was infiltration of agents and sympathizers into army, police, and South Korean communities. In the early stages of the guerrilla movement the guerrillas were very successful at inserting men and women into target communities. One must assume that the infiltrators were able to establish livelihoods and identities; and that their Communist masters were able for some years to protect them from denunciation by virtue of a generally assumed certainty of reprisal.

These infiltrators in turn manned widespread guerrilla intelligence and communications systems, a good example being the communications net in the town of Masan. Led by a locally well-known newspaperman, it operated for nearly two years and some of its members were friends of local government officials.

#### Local Support for the Guerrillas

The social classes involved in supporting the guerrillas were largely workers, artisans, and students, and their area of greatest activity was southwest Korea. This local support took the form of recruits, food, and clothing. Recruits were plentiful until large-scale, effective counteraction was undertaken. Food and clothing were obtained by contribution or forced requisition. The guerrillas' intelligence and information diminished once antiguerrilla operations were underway for there were few if any civilian sympathizers left to gather information after the police began rounding up inhabitants of guerrilla-infested areas. The guerrillas' problem was accentuated by the fact that their base areas were largely in uninhabited mountains where there had never been many civilians to call on. When the North Korean forces had the initiative and were operating in the south, intelligence for both guerrilla and regular Communist forces seems to have been excellent.

Information at hand does not permit any statement about the impact of events on local support. The data does not support even cautious surmise.

#### Outside Support for the Guerrillas

The nations involved in outside support were primarily the Soviet Union and the North Korean People's Republic and, in a rather different role, the People's Republic of China. In the



territories of the first two states, guerrillas were trained and indoctrinated and propaganda was manufactured and disseminated, and from them constant diplomatic and political support was forthcoming. Communist parties all around the globe chorused support, arms were smuggled in from North Korea, cadres were smuggled across the 38th parallel, and an active headquarters functioned in North Korea. All this was faithfully reflected in the principles and practices of the guerrillas, which seem to have owed nothing to China. However, when the resources of North Korea proved inadequate and when the Chinese Communists claimed that US ambitions extended beyond the Yalu, then Chinese divisions moved swiftly and effectively into Korea. By extension, this was support for the guerrillas, but the support was a by-product of the intervention, not its goal. Consideration of the guerrillas' activities leaves the impression that they were acting for and on behalf of Soviet Russia and North Korea rather than Communist China.

The relation of Soviet Russia and North Korea to the guerrillas was one of command. Directly under Kim Il-sung, the North Korean leader who probably received guidance from the Soviet ambassador, was the 526th Guerrilla Guidance Bureau. In sequence below it were: Pyongyang Liaison (Central), Southern Corps, and Southern Division, the latter being the lowest echelon of command in North Korea. Immediately below it and south of the 38th parallel were intended to be six branch units, of which only two became operational.

Chief of the 526th Bureau was Bae Chol. In late spring of 1951, he and his masters sent Lee Yong Sang, who had been the North Korean ambassador to Seoul, below the 38th parallel to command. In the Taebaek area, in the east of Korea, the guerrilla commander was Maj. Gen. Lee Ban Nam, a professional soldier of the North Korean army. Lee Yong Sang remained in overall command until he was killed by a South Korean patrol in September 1953.

## THE COUNTERINSURGENT RESPONSE

### Attempts to Cut Local Support

Attempts to cut local support took various forms. The single most important, perhaps, was the rounding up of all inhabitants of the mountain areas in which the guerrillas sought to establish their bases. The directors of the counterinsurgent effort knew that among these civilians were the carriers of food and information to the guerrillas, as well as active guerrillas posing as

local civilians. Interning, interrogating, and screening them not only interrupted the guerrilla line of communications but also uncovered numbers of guerrilla agents. It seems probable that the guerrillas' inclusion of a preponderance of workers and students aided screening and that trained and experienced interrogators learned to pick up the mannerisms of speech and behavior that betrayed the townsmen.

The effectiveness of this technique under Korean conditions is suggested by the fact that in "Operation Ratkiller," winter of 1951-1952, about 10,000 persons were taken into custody, of whom 5,700 were found conclusively to be guerrillas or guerrilla sympathizers. This particular operation was only the first of a series, similar in terrain, targets, and methods, which swept and reswept the Chiri mountain area until all but a few hundred guerrillas were killed or captured.

For several years before the invasion, psychological warfare measures to separate the guerrillas from the people gave American observers the impression of being a small-scale, low-priority operation. Not until December 1948 did the Ministry of Defense open an Information and Education Bureau and give it the formal mission of encouraging cooperation between the people on the one hand and the soldiers and police on the other. The bureau's resources, however, were then committed to a propaganda effort along the 38th parallel aimed at North Korea.

A few months earlier the Republic of Korea outlawed communism, so that the police had a legal weapon to use in cutting the links between the people and the Communist Party. A vigorous round-up of sympathizers followed. About a year later, in October 1949, the government offered an amnesty to repentant Party members and sympathizers, but without result.

When in succeeding years, both before and after the invasion, the army and police would sweep an area, psychological warfare specialists would accompany them and, by literature and speeches, seek to win popular support for the government and take it from the guerrilla. Initially, these efforts were on a very modest scale, but after the stabilization of the front in 1951, American techniques, material support, and encouragement put these efforts on a different level.

"Operation Ratkiller" illustrates the scale and techniques of the later and more effective years. In planning the effort, the staffs concerned explicitly assumed that if they could shift civilian support from the guerrilla to the government, that is, isolate the guerrilla from the people, the guerrillas' cause

would become hopeless. For psychological warfare in "Operation Ratkiller," the Korean army contributed an information and education battalion and put a loudspeaker company in direct support. The United States maintained and operated a mobile radio broadcasting station at the operation's task force headquarters, and leaflet dropping and air voice missions were flown by the US Fifth Air Force. The US Forces furnished most of the material and printing.

General supervision and coordination of the effort was performed by the Psywar Division (G3), Eighth US Army in Korea, through two US officers attached to task force headquarters. The Korean Army's Psywar Division contributed advice and propaganda themes, aided by Korean staff officers and interpreters. American NCO specialists supervised the Korean loudspeaker company.

In the course of the operation, some 10,000 mimeographed newspapers were distributed daily. Leaflets dropped numbered 12,170,000. There were 14 hours of voice broadcasts and 400 hours of radio programs. Finally, 19 information centers in the operational area provided daily contact with the people--and with guerrillas who sought to surrender.

The propaganda stressed that the ROK soldier sought only to restore law and order so that the people might be at peace. These words were matched with the deeds of the soldiers, who had been instructed to be on their best behavior and to cultivate good relations with the people.

A second theme was a factual flow of news about the course of the war. In planning the propaganda effort it was assumed that information was flowing from the people through guerrilla sympathizers to the rank-and-file guerrilla, and these last were thus somewhat insulated from the news. Consequently, an abundance of news was programmed. These assumptions were later confirmed by captured guerrillas, who stressed the morale impact of factual news in sharp contrast to the previous news diet of fabricated Communist victories.

After psychological warfare and widespread detention, a third technique in general use in all major operations against the guerrillas was the institution of rigid controls on the movement of individuals and information. The ROK government would declare a state of martial law and cut telephone communications between villages. Controlling the movement of individuals was a powerful weapon against food suppliers and couriers, while curfew violations were strong evidence of Communist sympathies. Controlling telephones helped cut the warning times to the guerrillas on troop

movements, and the general interference with this information flow was of technical interest to ROK and Eighth Army intelligence as well as a matter of immediate practical importance. The impact of these particular efforts on the Korean guerrillas cannot be measured by information available for this study.

It may be helpful to indicate the scale and duration of the major antiguerrilla operations during the period 1951-1954. The first was unique in that the forces committed were primarily Americans supported by South Korean security forces. This was the Pohang Guerrilla Hunt, conducted by the 1st Marine Division, January 18 to February 15, 1951. It eliminated (i.e., killed or captured) 304 guerrillas for a loss of 16 marines dead and 10 missing.

There then came "Operation Ratkiller," which was followed by four other operations similar in concept and execution. These are summarized as follows:

<u>Operation</u>	<u>Initial Date</u>	<u>Force Strength</u>	<u>Eliminations</u>
"Ratkiller"	December 1951	two divisions reinforced	16,700
"Ferret"	March 1952	division equivalent )	3,000
"Mongoose"	July 1952	two-division equivalent )	est.
"Bloodhound"	August 1952	division equivalent )	
"Trample"	December 1952	two-division equivalent	1,000 est.

It is interesting that during "Operation Bloodhound" the guerrilla leader in South Korea was killed by a patrol, while at the end of "Operation Trample" only a few hundred guerrillas, fragmented and leaderless, remained in the field.

#### Attempts to Block Outside Support

The stabilization of the front automatically provided a heavily guarded border zone which in turn tended in ever greater degree to cut the guerrillas from their support in the north. The phrase "ever greater" is used on the assumption that with the passage of time the area of the front was better fortified, and that its terrain, roads, and telecommunications were better known. The coast and offshore traffic were subject to surveillance by US and ROK warships.

The steady shrinkage in the numbers of guerrillas believed to be in South Korea would indicate that neither infiltration from the north nor recruitment in the south could come near to

replacing personnel losses, while the statement made earlier that at any given time only half the guerrillas were armed implies that it was not possible for the North Koreans to smuggle arms across the front or over the beaches.

#### Adequacy of General and Local Administrative Machinery

Some information is available on the police force of the Republic of Korea. In 1945, the US authorities in Korea organized a national police force and a constabulary, the latter a paramilitary force. The two forces recruited independently and there was at the beginning a bitter rivalry between them. Initially, their professional quality was low, they were poorly paid, and their dealings with the public were unfortunate. In 1948, when the republic was formally established, the police totalled 45,000 men in eight divisions and the "constabulary" was a 50,000-man, lightly equipped force that became the South Korean army.

Between 1948 and 1950 both police and army devoted much activity to antiguerrilla operations, in the case of the army so much as to seriously affect training schedules and thus lessen combat effectiveness. Both police and army were widely deployed and conducted antiguerrilla sweeps, generally pursuit after overt incidents, in the vicinity of their posts.

In these prewar years the police proved well able to deal with strikes and demonstrations. In regard to the guerrillas, the army was able to keep the level of hostile activity within tolerable limits.

In January 1950, the Republic of Korea adopted a plan to form 22 combat police battalions in effect, a constabulary. On becoming operational, they would release army units from anti-guerrilla duties. By mid-June, 14 such battalions had been formed and had taken their position, and some army units had been accordingly freed to resume training.

From that date on, police battalions and army security units assumed much of the day-to-day burden of antiguerrilla operations. In so doing, they tended to blur any distinction between army and police functions in counterinsurgency. Available sources show that as late as the winter of 1951-1952 the police had separate and completely independent information channels, and that intelligence would pass up to the highest police echelon in the area,

then over to the task force commander, and then finally down the army channel to the unit commander, a costly and time-consuming procedure.

### Indoctrination

In retrospect, the indoctrination of soldiers or police in the attitudes and behavior most helpful in antiguerrilla action was significantly neglected by the government. By late 1951, when "Operation Ratkiller" was carried out, the effectiveness of antiguerrilla procedures was recognized at least locally, and participating troops were instructed in suitable attitudes. However, the fact that during the whole period of counterinsurgent operations no special training was given to Army units suggests that this effort should not be appraised as more than partial recognition of, and inadequate response to, this need.

### Moral and Ethical Attitudes

Moral and ethical attitudes of soldiers and police were on a number of occasions counterproductive. Stationing of poorly trained, underpaid police in communities, and these police sometimes of questionable loyalty, had an adverse effect on local sentiment during the early days of the regime. As for the military, the occasional killing or imprisoning of innocent people had its adverse effect on local opinion. However, the success of the government forces and the suppression of the guerrillas, despite the pressures of a major conflict, would suggest that such episodes though deplorable were not of a number nor character to affect the antiguerrilla campaign.

### OUTCOME OF THE GUERRILLA EFFORT

The guerrillas' effort to assist North Korea and the Soviet Union in uniting the Korean peninsula as one Communist state failed. Moreover, antiguerrilla operations do not seem to have diverted combat units from the front. When the needs of the front dictated, the UN Command repeatedly left the guerrillas to be contained by the police and security battalions mentioned above.

### Bibliographic Note

The principal source for this study was a privileged, unclassified work. It may not be identified, so the authors must issue the caveat that responsibility for any errors of fact or interpretation the reader may find are solely theirs.



Appendix A

FRENCH EXPERIENCE IN VIETNAM: GEOGRAPHIC  
AND HISTORICAL SETTING

by

Frank N. Trager

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## Introduction to Vietnam

by

Frank N. Trager

If use is made of standard racial categories, such as Mongoloid, Negroid, and Caucasoid, the Viet, the indigenous name for the majority people who inhabit the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DVRN) or the Communist North Vietnam, and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) or South Vietnam, belong to the Mongoloid race. That is, the Vietnamese are a people who originated in what is now called China, migrated southward and by conquest and mixture absorbed and displaced an aboriginal group (Melanoid) and the Malayo-Indonesian groups who apparently preceded them on the Indochinese Peninsula. Together, before 300 B.C., they gave rise to Bronze Age culture, called Dong Son after a village in Central Vietnam.

The name Viet is a reading of two Chinese characters (Yue), probably given to lands "beyond" or "far-away" in relation to the ancient Chinese seat of power, hence to lands somewhere south of the Yangtze River. At some time before the end of the 3rd Century B.C. local rulers in this general area appear to have reached the borders of North Vietnam, perhaps as far south as the Red River. One such, known as General Trien-Da (Tch'ao T'o), emerges as a Chinese king over a land called Nam Yue or Nam Viet, but this kingdom's capital is supposed to be near Canton and is generally not regarded as part of Vietnam today. Trien-Da's dynasty, which was conquered by the Han Chinese in a year usually cited as 111 B.C., may or may not have extended its boundaries to North Vietnam. In any event the Han Chinese did so and named the area the province of Giao-Chi, which means "meeting," or splayed, "toes." Giao-Chi under the Han Chinese included what is now Hainan Island and North, and part of Central, Vietnam.

Vietnam as a name disappeared until the end of the period of Chinese domination in the 10th Century A.D. But the Viet peoples struggled throughout the first millenium A.D. against their Chinese overlords, creating legends out of the efforts made by

those who, however temporarily, succeeded in throwing off Chinese imperialist rule. Among these heroes are the Trung Sisters (floruit 39-43 A.D.), who became generals and queens until their defeat. They were "honored and worshipped . . . on the sixth day of the second month of the lunar year" in commemoration of their effort, as are another group from the Early Ly dynasty in the 6th Century A.D. whose founder, Ly Nam De (Ly Bi) (floruit 544-548), is sometimes regarded as the true leader of the first Vietnamese dynasty in what is called today North and Central Vietnam. They, too, as others before and after, were put down by the Chinese masters.

By the end of the 10th Century A.D. the majority people of the peninsula were successful in eliminating Chinese rule. Though there were later, and in the end successful, struggles against Chinese powers strong enough to attack the land--the Mongols, the Ming, the Manchus--the Viet people always fought to retain their independence. They called their country Dai Co Viet (Great Viet State) or Dai Viet (Viet State with nationalist overtones) or, by official proclamation in 1802, Vietnam. The Chinese, however, after suppressing the Early Ly revolt, called the territory Annam, the pacified south. This derogatory name, applied to Central Vietnam and continued in use by Westerners, has never been employed by the Vietnamese themselves.

Thus it may be said that in the 10th Century A.D. when the Dai Viet or Vietnam state emerged from Chinese imperialist rule, the Viet people had clearly broken political ties with the land from which they had emigrated. They had displayed throughout the millenium of their poorly recorded history a determination to be free from foreign or distant domination. This is probably a somewhat romanticized view of their history. One might say, with some truth, that what we find is one set of more or less feudal chieftains, lords, and masters, striving against a more distant and--until the yoke was finally thrown off--more powerful group of feudal lords and masters. Power and wealth were at stake, and the winner gained both. But some facts, some good guesses, and some imponderables must be considered.

The facts are easy: here is a people who derive from what is now called China; who used Chinese characters until the 17th Century to write their language; who followed Chinese Confucian, Mahayana Buddhist, and Taoist traditions--and to a great extent still do; who honor the memory of at least two First-Century A.D. Chinese governors or mandarins who are recorded as having taught them "morals and ritual" (i.e., Confucian ethics) and also the "use of farm implements" (Governors Tich Quang and Nham Dien); and who, in comparison with the two other great migrations

southward into the Indochinese Peninsula, those of the Tibeto-Burman and Shan-Thai-Lao peoples, remain today the most Sinicized of all Southeast Asian members of the Mongoloid race.

The guesses are also fairly easy. We are frequently guilty of what philosophers have called the "pathetic fallacy" of reading back into time our present feelings, attitudes, and thought. The people who inhabit the land of China and nearby areas may be all Mongoloid by race, but within any major section of this vast geographical area, they have been or are as varied, as friendly or unfriendly, and as peaceful or warlike toward their neighbors as their counterparts among the Caucasoids and Negroids. (A moment's reflection on the history of the warring tribes of Europe, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere should make clear that proposition's firm foundation.) In this sense, the variations within the great Mongoloid Asian area are at least as significant as the identities. The Han Chinese, as the Mongol, Ming, Ching, Republican, and Communist Chinese, have not hesitated, when strong, to try to impose their power on their near non-Han, non-Mongol, non-Manchu, or other Mongoloid neighbors and ethnic siblings and cousins. And in this sense, the Viet people, absorbing what they wished from their more powerful kin, nonetheless wanted --in the sense of that word which cannot be quantified but which is visible after the event of its expression--to be free of their powerful neighbors.

This type of event, to which today we unhesitatingly give the name of nationalism, or zeal for independence and patriotism, or love of country, surely existed in some form in earlier periods. For loyalty to one's countryside, however big or small it may be, is a fact in human experience of great age and condition. To use such words as "surely existed" is one of the imponderables of history. We do not know what we would like to know about the past. We cannot prove its existence. But we cannot disprove its possibility. How else can the fact be explained that, for ten centuries at least, a Sinic people called the Viets took repeated action of some kind to become an independent, differentiated regime in its own arena? And as we shall see, though they succumbed once again to another imperium, they found the instruments and the institutions of that later time to throw off the yoke of foreign domination.

Vietnam--as two words in the Vietnamese manner, or as one word--tended to disappear in Western languages, certainly with the beginning of the European explorations in the East. Tonkin (or Tongking), the Chinese name for Hanoi ("capital of the east") --a name which according to one authority did not exist in the Vietnamese language prior to the 20th Century--came to stand for

North Vietnam. Annam, as indicated, was used by non-Viets for Central Vietnam, or that area roughly from the 19th parallel to the 16th parallel and including the imperial Vietnamese capital at Hué. Cochin China (or Cochinchina), a name of obscure, possibly Portuguese origin, came to be applied to South Vietnam. And the central mountains became known on the maps as the Annamite Chain. The Vietnamese seldom if ever use these Westernisms. For them the mountain chain is called Trong-Son, and the parts of the country are designated simply as North, Center, and South, Bac, Trung, and Nam, with the additional word Ky or Bo to mean domain or region.

The Vietnamese, who number about 31,000,000 today (a little more than 50% live in North Vietnam), and who have come to be an 85% to 90% majority in the eastern section of the Indochinese Peninsula, were by no stretch of the imagination a docile, peaceful people. As they moved southward they came into contact with earlier arrivals whom they successively conquered or displaced or absorbed as they gradually imposed their rule on the land. In a 1954 study, Connaissance du Viet-Nam, the authors, Huard and Durand, give us a map which dates the march south of the Viets from the northern border to the tip of the Cambu Peninsula.\* By the 15th Century, after centuries of intermittent warfare, they had conquered the Malayo-Indonesian Chams, who occupied Central Vietnam and who for at least a millenium represented the most Hinduized of the Southeast Asian states. Remnants of the Chams still live in Central Vietnam, which once was theirs, but today they number some 35,000 and are divided into several sub-tribal groups, a number of whom have been converted to Islam. The Viets also displaced or otherwise confined to the uplands the earlier Malayo-Indonesian arrivals whom they stigmatized as the Moi, or the savages. The French were to call them the Montagnards, a polite term for "hill-billy," and today it is estimated that they number between 800,000 and 1,000,000. By the mid-18th Century, the Viets had conquered the Khmers or Cambodians, whose once great empire had earlier extended from the Bay of Bengal on the west to the China Sea. But in South Vietnam today remain perhaps as many as 400,000 Cambodians whose brothers on the other side of the border remember their great past glory and still harbor resentment, if not enmity, toward the Viets on their east and the Thai on their west, who also helped to bring about their decline. By the mid-18th Century, the Viet people dominated the land called Vietnam from the China border to the southeastern tip of the peninsula.

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\*Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, p. 33.

## THE INDOCHINESE PENINSULA

The ancient Greeks, at least from the time of Pliny the Elder (First Century A.D.), had a word for it. They called it the Chryse Chersonese, the Golden Peninsula. In time, this second, smaller land mass--the Indian subcontinent is the other one--descending from the eastern rim of the Himalayas into the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, came to include the pre-European kingdoms or empires of Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. (Technically, one should also add Malaya--the "tail" to the Indochinese "kite.") Vietnam occupies the eastern lines of this peninsula as an "S"-shaped curve. Its north-south axis extends for about 1,000 miles, narrowed at the waist to an average of 40 miles. Its width, in the two main river deltas, the Red River in North Vietnam and the Mekong in South Vietnam, extends from 250 to 300 miles. These deltas are its rice baskets. In between these two rice-producing areas there is the long central mountainous chain, whose peaks near Dalat reach to about 6,500 feet, and a narrow, heavily populated coastal plain divided by massifs and hilly spurs which slice to the long coastline of the China Sea.

These four major geographical features, the two river deltas, the inland central spine, and the coastal plain have conditioned the lives and fortunes of the Vietnamese for 2,000 years. Their land (about 126,000 square miles), slightly larger than New Mexico, is situated to receive the southwest and northeast monsoons, the earth-sustaining rains (50" to 120" per year) which help to create the two main tropical seasons, hot-dry and hot-wet.

The Vietnamese are essentially a lowland people. Their sedentary food-producing habits (wet-rice cultivation and fishing), the remnants of their animistic myths and superstitions which cause them to fear the hills and mountains, their good sense about the malarious character of the highlands, all combine to keep them as a lowland people and hence inhabitants of the deltas and coastal plains. The uplands, plateaus, and mountains are for the minorities, or those displaced and downgraded in the southward march of the Viets, and those, who, like the Muongs, the Man, Meo, and the Thai are later arrivals. The ethnic Chinese, another major group, also arrived later. Perhaps as many as a million live today in Vietnam, mainly in urban areas. They have remained for the most part, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, a self-separated group, the "overseas Chinese."

The Red River Valley and delta of the north is one of the two most densely populated areas in Southeast Asia (Java exceeds

it). Some 1,500 persons per square mile live there, while the Mekong in the south, ending its course as the tenth longest river in the world, supports an average density of 250 persons per square mile. The mountainous central area of Vietnam constitutes about 90% of the total land of Vietnam but contains not more than 10% of its total population. Here the tribal and non-Viet peoples tend to practice "shifting," in contrast to the "sedentary" agriculture of the lowland majority.

There was and is a historical logic for calling this peninsula Indochina. Today, as yesterday, it represents a confluence and further evolution of two great cultural strains which came respectively from India and China. But while saying this, it is also important to note that the evolution of these cultures in each of the states of Indochina has resulted in genuine indigenous or naturalized adaptations.

The Viet people who entered and ultimately conquered their part of the peninsula found there Hinduized and Buddhist kingdoms and societies which they incorporated or assimilated with their own Sinicized cultural patterns. These absorptions influenced their own cultural baggage, which included the northern Mahayana variety of Buddhism. The mixture has given rise to such Buddhist groups as the current General Association of Vietnamese Buddhists, which claims 1,000,000 members in the south, and to the Buddhist-influenced southern sects known as the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, which claim as many as 2,000,000 members.

(The Buddhist tradition is normally tolerant and absorptive of other elements, yet Buddhist leaders were sufficiently aroused to challenge the Roman Catholic minority who dominated the government of Ngo Dinh Diem. The issue between them was perhaps more political than religious.)

The Chinese influence came with the Viets and was certainly imposed upon them by the 1,000 years of Chinese suzerainty over Vietnam. The Vietnamese emperor, like his Chinese counterpart, held the "mandate from Heaven." Ancestor worship was and still is almost everywhere practiced in Vietnam, even by Buddhists and to some extent by Roman Catholics. The Vietnamese script was written in Chinese characters until the 17th Century, when it was romanized by a French missionary. The civil service was the Chinese mandarin system, based in principle solely on education and examinations.

Both the Chinese and Buddhist cultural patterns strongly reinforced the central role of the hierarchical family and the communalized or autonomous village system with its elements of



prescribed ceremony, respected authority, cooperative effort, and general indifference to, if not actual antagonism for, the central authority. This central authority, the government, was viewed as the source of power, taxes and other forms of levies, restraints, and inhibitions upon the cylindrical, relatively self-sufficient life of the village and villager.

By the time the French arrived in Indochina and in Vietnam, the latter appears to have been an indigenously integrated Confucian-Buddhist Vietnamese society. There was domestic conflict to be sure--especially between strong northern and southern Viet families seeking ultimate power. Conflict for 150 years between the Trinh family group of the north and the Nguyen family group based at Hué helped to prepare the way for ultimate French power. (There actually was a dividing wall built at the 19th parallel.) The French backed the Nguyen and aided its leader to become the founder-hero of the last dynasty to rule a united Vietnam. Emperor Gia Long reestablished the unity of his country and proclaimed its independence as Vietnam in 1802 at the royal capital of Hué. (The last representative of this dynasty who held the position as head of state was Bao Dai, who was used as a puppet-emperor by the French after World War II and was deposed as head of the State of Vietnam /South Vietnam/ after the country was partitioned at the 17th parallel by the Geneva Agreements of 1954.) There are cultural differences, including dialect, pronunciation, and even dress, between North and South Vietnamese which have continued to today.

The society as a whole, however, prior to the final French conquest in the second half of the 19th Century, represented a convergence of political and religious power, vested in a sovereign emperor or ruler, assisted by a mandarin bureaucracy, and dependent upon Buddhist monks for religious sanction; all these were related intimately to an ancestral family system, and a village commune, or cooperative and autonomous village structure. The totality had "magical" properties which were not to be lightly violated; it provided minutely for every aspect of individual life, which was always subordinated to the group, the family, the clan, or the tribe.

This in broad strokes represents Vietnam, its people, its land, its place in Indochina before the intrusion and conquest of the French.

Vietnam: The French Intrusion and Conquest  
to the 1880s\*

by

Frank N. Trager

A brief glance at the European intrusion in Southern Asia reveals the fact that the French were the last to arrive and to found an empire which they were able to retain until the mid-20th Century. Like other Europeans they came in search of treasure and trade and to save "heathen souls." French nationals as missionaries were originally under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic archbishops of Lisbon and Goa, for the Portuguese (and the Spaniards) had preceded them to the East Indies, and Pope Alexander II's Papal Bull of 1493 had placed missionary efforts in Vietnam under the Portuguese archbishops. In the 17th Century, France initiated its own missionary movement.

The Jesuit Fathers' work in Asia, especially beginning with the mission to the Japanese founded by Saint Francis Xavier in 1549, had led to their prominence in Asia as learned Europeans. The closing of the Japanese mission at the beginning of the 17th Century made several distinguished Jesuits available for other missions, and Vietnam attracted a number of them, beginning in 1615. Father Alexandre de Rhodes appears to have been the most gifted of these until his death in 1660. It was he who translated the catechism into Vietnamese and who perfected the efforts of his predecessors in converting that language from an ideographic Chinese script into a romanized alphabet, Quoc Ngu, which is still the written language of the country. And it was he who convinced the Papacy and the French Crown to engage more seriously and effectively in missionary labors in Vietnam. His plan for training indigenous priests and for replacing Portuguese control

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\*This paper was prepared with the assistance of Marjorie W. Normand.

by French-led effort was sanctioned in both Rome and Paris shortly before his death.

Thus, in the second half of the 17th Century, France began its own missionary movement, aimed at replacing waning Portuguese religious and political influence (the Dutch had defeated the Portuguese decisively at Malacca in 1641), and simultaneously sought to limit the extra-French controls of the Jesuit Order. In 1659 the French founded the *Société des Missions Etrangères*. The Société began, three to four years later, from its field base in Ayuthia, capital of Siam, to send missionaries into Cambodia and the three regions of Vietnam--Tonkin (North Vietnam), Annam (Central Vietnam), and Cochinchina (South Vietnam). When, after four attempts, the French succeeded in creating their East India Trading Company (*Campagne des Indes Orientales*) (1664), the stage was set for a vigorous combination of religious and mercantile expansion in the Indochinese Peninsula.

These events coincided with one of the weak periods in Vietnamese history. The reigning Le dynasty "was permitted to exist as a semicorpse but not allowed to die." Actual power rested in the hands of two powerful families, the Trinh in the North (Tonkin) and the Nguyen in the Center-South (Annam). Their struggles for power punctuate the history of the 17th and 18th Centuries and were not resolved until the beginning of the 19th Century with the eventual triumph of the Nguyen, aided by French missionaries.

Most, if not all, students of Southeast Asian history agree that European commercial relations with Vietnam began with, or became more profitable after, the establishment of missionary influence. Religion, trade, and political interest remained "closely allied," despite a ruling from the French under Louis XIV that missionary activity was not to be carried out for such purposes. French bishops and apostolic vicars, especially François Pallu and Pierre de la Motte, who succeeded Alexandre de Rhodes, advanced the cause of the *Société des Missions Etrangères* "in all questions which from near or far touch on the advancement of the missions and on the progress of French influence."\*

But this "double current of ideas" did not fulfill in the 18th Century the optimistic beginnings of the 17th Century. Conflict between the missionary orders, at least until the suppression of the Jesuits in 1774, the anticlericalism of the French Revolution which affected the roles of the Church (and its missions)

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\*Abbé Adrien Launay, Histoire Générale de la Société des Missions Etrangères, Paris, 1894, vol. 1, p. 186.

in France, Italy, and Spain, the debilitating effects of the 18th-Century Anglo-French wars, and consequent defeat of the French by the English in India contributed to the decline of French fortunes in Indochina.

The decline was abetted by the revival of hostilities between the Vietnamese elements associated with the Trinh and Nguyen families, and more particularly with the rebellion known in Vietnamese history by the area of its origin in central Annam, Tay Son. Three brothers of that village--Nhac, Lu, and Hué--led a successful revolt in the early 1770s against the established Nguyen family, leaders of the Center-South. The latter, dispersed, went further south to the Saigon and Camau Peninsula area. The Tay Son brothers were able to consolidate their power in the vicinity of Ankhe and Quinhon. This afforded the Trinh of the north the opportunity to invade and capture Hué in 1775. For the next dozen years civil war marked the course of Vietnamese history. Gradually, the Tay Son brothers, led by the youngest, Hué--who has been described as a military genius--exploited their advantage against both the Trinh at Hanoi and the remnants of the Nguyen at Saigon, and won. By 1788-1789, they not only defeated these rival claimants to power but also a Chinese (Manchu) army which invaded Vietnam to assist China's tributary princes. Hué married a daughter of the Le dynasty, nominally on the throne, and proclaimed himself emperor of a unified Vietnam. At his death in 1792, his son, Nguyen Quan Toan, succeeded him.

In the meantime, the displaced Nguyen family's cause fell to the leadership of one of its scions, Nguyen Anh, who had retreated before the Tay Son brothers, first to the Camau Peninsula and then to Poulo Condore Island off the coast of Cochinchina. In this process he met and became the lifelong friend of one of the great missionary-political French apostolic vicars to Cochinchina, Monsignor Pigneau de Behaine, Titular Bishop of Adran.

Pigneau was one of the colorful and effective individuals of that troubled time. He had been sent out to Cambodia as a missionary of the Société in 1765. By 1782 he had decided to risk his political future in alliance with Nguyen Anh. For the next five years he endeavored to get the French government, first in Pondicherry (India) and then in Paris, to back this young pretender to the Vietnamese throne and self-styled king of Cochinchina. In late 1787 Pigneau secured a treaty of alliance between Paris and Nguyen Anh by which France was to supply arms and men to help win the throne for its ally. In return France would enjoy certain trading, territorial, and other privileges to the exclusion of other Europeans. Such French aid was to be delivered via the French in Pondicherry. But the latter, either under

instructions from Paris or on their own authority, refused to honor the treaty. The Bishop thereupon proceeded on his own to raise a small military force and fleet and thus came in 1789 to the aid of his friend, who had returned to the mainland. Together they waged war against the Tay Son. Ten years later, in an assault which he led, Pigneau was killed. But Nguyen Anh went on and by 1802 had succeeded in defeating the Tay Son, the remnants of the Trinh, and all other opposition. He became in that year Emperor Gia Long, and Huế, which was his seat, became the capital of Bac, Trung, and Nam, once again a unified state of Vietnam. Founder of the Nguyen dynasty (of which Bao Dai was the last legitimate emperor or head of state), Gia Long was recognized by the Chinese Emperor Tsing and received the seal of office as a tributary prince in 1804. It was he who officially gave the name "Viet Nam" to the country.

Historical interpretation of the Tay Son rebellion and the accession of Gia Long to the throne at Huế in 1802 remains, today, divided. Some regard the Tay Son brothers as bandits who achieved power; others, as forerunners of later peasant rebel leaders who tried to secure some relief from the crushing burdens imposed upon the peasants by the seemingly ceaseless quarrels of the warring nobles and mandarins (the chief civil servants of the realm). For those who hold the first view, Gia Long is a national hero who emerged with legitimacy to reunite the kingdom under a proper royal government. And, whatever the view of the Tay Son brothers, Emperor Gia Long's name is celebrated today in both North and South Vietnam as a national hero. However, there are those Vietnamese who regard the youngest Tay Son brother, Hué, as a true hero and thus look upon Gia Long as one who was not necessarily entitled to the throne, and who in any event committed the fatal mistake of inviting in the French--a mistake of dire consequences as the 19th Century unfolded.

Gia Long reigned from 1802 until his death in 1820. Since the French government had not, as such, honored the treaty of 1787, and since during the Napoleonic era it was neither willing nor able to involve itself in the affairs of Vietnam, Gia Long had little, if any, difficulty in fending off the few official trading ventures proposed in the time of Napoleon and Louis XVIII. It would appear that the Vietnamese emperor wished to avoid getting embroiled in the Anglo-French war; in any event, he turned his considerable energies to the repair and restoration of his wartorn kingdom. Large landholdings of the noble class and villages held as tax-fiefs were abolished. Dykes were built in Tonkin; a long road from Hanoi to Saigon (1,300 miles) was completed; fortifications, in the French manner of outposts, were constructed at strategic centers throughout the land. And, probably to honor

Gia Long's French friend, Catholicism was liberally tolerated. At his death he recommended to his designated heir, Emperor Minh Mang, who was a son of his first concubine, that there be equal protection for the three principal religions of the realm: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Catholicism. But this was not to be.

At the end of Gia Long's reign, as John F. Cady points out:\*

France had very little to show in the way of tangible achievement [in the Far East] after almost two centuries of desultory activity on the part of French missionaries, traders, diplomats, and adventurers. . . . British naval and commercial hegemony . . . based on India, was unchallengeable, so that any move which France might contemplate within the area would have to fall within the bounds of British consent. . . . There were nevertheless two factors on the positive side of the French ledger. One was the vigorous religious revival, centering on France, which swept Catholic Europe following the downfall of Napoleon. The other was the well-nigh desperate concern on the part of the Orleanist and Napoleonic dynasties, which ruled France from 1830 to 1870, to recover at least a measure of the international prestige that had so long been associated with the name of France. These two elements united to revive the imperialist tradition of France in the Orient during the mid-century decades.

The piecemeal conquest of Vietnam, and of the revived kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia, were the consequences of this imperialist foray. And French Indochina became their collective name until 1954.

The conquest grew in the first instance out of the anti-missionary, anti-Catholic, and anti-"European barbarians" policies gradually adopted by Vietnamese Emperors Minh Mang (1820-1842), Thieu Tri (1842-1847), and Tu Duc (1847-1883). In 1825 Minh Mang limited the freedom of the missionaries; in 1833 an edict of death was issued against several, and one of them--Father Francis Isadore Gagelin--lost his life. In 1836 proselytizing was prohibited and all ports save one were closed to Europeans, especially to priests. In 1848 any European priests found were "to be thrown into the sea with rocks tied to their necks," and native Christians were to recant or be banished. Persecution led

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\*The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia, Cornell University Press, 1954, pp. 16-17.

to martyrdom for European Catholics and others, while martyrdom apparently encouraged new missionaries to enter the country illicitly. The French sent armed vessels to protect the missionaries--in 1843, 1845, 1847, 1852--and did not hesitate to fire upon the shore cities.

Minh Mang viewed his task in a way different from that of his father, Gia Long. He was a traditionalist, a strict Confucian, and a Chinese scholar, and he desired above all to give his country peace and unity. This meant to him a return to the Confucian ethic uniting all customs, beliefs, and institutions; it also meant the eradication of all French influence from his empire.

His dislike of Christianity extended beyond this antiforeign attitude. He knew his position was made insecure by the mandarin's favor for the legitimate heir who had been passed over by Gia Long. Therefore he could not tolerate the propagation of a religion which disrupted Vietnamese-Confucian patterns of thought and behavior as to the Emperor's supreme authority. Not only the Emperor but the entire mandarin system, resting on the authority of a divinely ordained imperial power, was threatened by the attitude of indigenous Christians who would not submit to the absolute authority of the Emperor. To eliminate this kind of thinking, Minh Mang not only had to expel the foreign missionaries, but also had to destroy the Christian enclaves which had escaped local mandarin supervision.

His first moves were of a peaceful nature. He issued an edict in 1825, closing Vietnam to further missionaries, and called those already there to his court as "translators." Three missionaries from Cochinchina were brought to his court in 1827. They were treated graciously, accorded high mandarin rank and official titles as royal interpreters, but their assignments were specious. They were finally released through the intervention of Le Van Duyet, Viceroy of Cochinchina, who had been a companion of the Bishop of Adran. In an impassioned letter, he recalled the aid given to Gia Long.

. . . We still have in our mouth the rice with which we were nourished by the Bishop of Adran when chased, tracked by the Tay Son, we were dying of hunger in the islands of the Gulf of Siam, and we would persecute his co-religionists! No. . . .

Minh Mang continued to refuse politely French attempts to reopen official relations. J.B. Chaigneau, one of the original French companions of Pigneau de Behaine, had visited France in 1819 and



returned to Hué in 1821. He brought presents from Louis XVIII and was accredited as an agent of France, consul for French subjects, and commissar of the King to conclude a treaty of commerce between Vietnam and France. Minh Mang received Chaigneau but refused to read the letter sent him by Louis XVIII. His "Mandarin for Foreigners" wrote a letter to the Minister of the Navy which clearly indicated his unwillingness to agree to any relations between Vietnam and France:

The frontiers of the Kingdom of Annam are situated at the extremities of the South, and those of France at the extremities of the West, the limits of the two States are separated by several seas or by a distance of several thousand leagues. . . . The people of our country are rarely able to come to yours. . . . If the people of your country desire to trade in our kingdom, they will conform to its rules, since that is reasonable.

In 1822 the frigate Cléopâtre docked at Tourane, carrying a letter from the King of France. Minh Mang sent presents and ordered that the frigate's commander be treated with honor, but refused to receive the letter. Another letter from Louis XVIII was refused with the excuse that Minh Mang could find no one to translate it. Finally in 1825, convinced that the change in official attitude rendered their position untenable, the last two surviving French mandarins sailed for France.

When missionaries refused to heed his edict forbidding them to enter Vietnam or returned after having been exiled, Minh Mang turned to violence. Le Van Duyet, the last powerful defender of Christians in Cochinchina, died in 1831. In revenge for his actions halting persecutions of Christians, Minh Mang had the viceroy's tomb desecrated. This caused a strong reaction in Cochinchina where Le Van Duyet's officers raised the standard of revolt, led by Le Van Khoi. They captured Saigon and overran most of Cochinchina.

Despite refusal by French missionaries to come to his aid, Khoi was joined by indigenous Christians eager to battle Minh Mang. Such a situation offered the Emperor a perfect excuse for persecuting Christians. The first victim was François Isidore Gagelin, imprisoned and strangled to death on October 17, 1833. Many missionaries, including Monsignor Taberd, apostolic vicar, fled to Cambodia or Siam.

When Minh Mang, after a bloody two-year war, retook Saigon in September 1835, he found among the rebel leaders a French missionary, Monsignor Marchand, who apparently had resisted Khoi's

requests for official Catholic support of the revolt. The Emperor regarded him as a chief rebel, however, and he was tortured and put to death. The list of martyrs during the seven-year period between 1833 and 1840 includes four apostolic vicars and seven missionaries, as well as an unknown number of Vietnamese Christians. In 1838 a new edict, aimed at returning indigenous Christians to the traditional order by instructing them in Confucian morals, was given out.

Events in China had their repercussions at Hué where Minh Mang heard with horror the results of the Opium War. He began to reconsider his position vis-a-vis the French missionaries and in order to stave off French reprisals decided to send a mission to France. In January 1840, he dispatched three mandarins to Paris authorized to conclude a commercial agreement between France and Annam. Louis Philippe refused to receive them, and his ministers, spurred on by the Church and missionaries, reproached their religious intolerance. The mandarins were surprised by the vehemence of French governmental reaction to events in Vietnam, and especially by ministerial threats of French intervention if persecution continued.

Minh Mang died on January 20, 1841, before the failure of this mission could affect his policies. His death gave some respite to the Church which, while badly shaken, was in some ways stronger than before. The possibility of martyrdom seemed to attract new missionaries. By 1840 there was a total of 3 apostolic vicars (one each for Eastern Tonkin, Western Tonkin, and Cochinchina), 2 coadjutors, 24 missionaries, 144 priests, and 420,000 Catholics in Vietnam.

The new ruler, Thieu Tri (1842-1847), continued the policy of his father but with some modifications. He lacked Minh Mang's vigor and singleness of purpose; while he continued applying the edicts against Christianity, he dared not continue killing foreign missionaries. Instead, he imprisoned them and seemed to welcome opportunities to expel them peaceably. Times had changed in France, also, and while Louis Philippe and his Foreign Minister Guizot did not wish to become embroiled in a Vietnamese war, they could not completely ignore events there, in the face of spreading public sympathy in France for the Christian martyrs.

The first intervention of the French navy in Vietnamese affairs occurred in 1843. The Emperor had condemned five missionaries to death but, loath to kill them and invite French intervention, had allowed them instead to languish in the Hué prison. The French commander Favin-Leveque, with the corvette l'Héroïne, entered the port of Tourane on February 26, 1843. His mission

was ostensibly to renew commercial relations with Annam, but his real purpose also included backing up the threats made to the Vietnamese delegation in France in 1840 by checking on the situation. The commercial parley went badly, but during this time a young priest smuggled a letter to the commander describing the plight of the five imprisoned missionaries. Favin-Leveque demanded their release from the governor of the province, and presented him with a letter addressed to the "first minister" in which he announced:

France has heard their cries and I come, in the name of His Majesty, King of the French, to demand their release, to bring them to their homeland.

The governor received a favorable response from Hué and the missionaries were released in the custody of Favin-Leveque. They wished to remain in Cochinchina but the Commander insisted they leave, as he had promised.

This direct action by the French navy on behalf of the missionaries was the first in a series of incidents which led directly to the decision of the French government to intervene in Vietnam. Having recovered from the effects of the Revolution and the Empire, the navy was eager for additional activity and returned to its role of protector of missionaries.

With the recommencement of the persecutions, another incident ensued when Monsignor Lefebvre, Bishop of Isauroplid and recently made apostolic vicar of Western Cochinchina, was condemned to death. He was arrested in the province of Vinh Long on October 31, 1844, and conducted to Hué for sentencing. By order of Admiral Cécille, commander of the French naval division for the Far East, the corvette l'Alcmène was immediately dispatched to Tourane to demand Monsignor Lefebvre's freedom. This request was granted and the bishop was sent to Singapore. Refusing to accept his exile, he secretly returned to Cochinchina. Arrested again and condemned once more to death, he was sentenced to exile by Thieu Tri and was conducted on one of the Emperor's junks to Singapore. This action indicates that Thieu Tri was intimidated by French intervention and did not wish to provoke further incidents by executing missionaries. The affair also may serve as an index of the aggressive singleness of purpose of the missionaries who openly defied the Emperor's authority to eject them from Vietnam, an attitude which often spurred the Emperor to more violent methods.

After each intervention, Thieu Tri vented his wrath on Vietnamese Christians, who were massacred or exiled to distant areas.

When persecutions recommenced after the departure of l'Alcmène, Commander Lapierre and Captain (later Admiral) Rigault de Genouilly were dispatched with two French naval vessels to Tourane in March 1847. They demanded from Thieu Tri an edict similar to that obtained from China two years previously, granting security for Frenchmen and liberty of religion for Catholics. On April 14, when the Vietnamese reinforced their fleet in the bay of Tourane, Lapierre took the initiative and opened fire on the five Vietnamese corvettes in the harbor, completely destroying them. He failed to gain satisfaction for the Christians; instead he sailed away leaving the missionaries to face the revenge of the Emperor.

Thieu Tri, enraged by the defeat of his fleet, offered a reward for the murder of any European in Vietnam; however, he succumbed to fever and died in November 1847. He had attempted to mitigate the effects of his father's policy toward foreign missionaries to avoid providing an excuse for French intervention. The French government, however, released from the pressing entanglements of the Empire and emboldened by British success in China, was more inclined than before to heed the requests of the missionaries. This, in turn, encouraged the Church in France to press for political solutions for the difficulties which its missionaries encountered in proselytizing in Vietnam. The missionaries themselves, distressed by the results ensuing from the sporadic visits made by French ships, sought a more reliable means of obtaining liberty of religion. To this end, the apostolic vicar of Tonkin wrote to Louis Philippe in October 1848, requesting diplomatic action rather than hasty naval incursions. As for the motive of the letter, the Bishop, fusing the goals of French glory and religious propagation, describes it as ". . . the sole desire to contribute to the good of religion, to the tranquility of our Christians and to the honor of France, in procuring for Your Majesty the occasion for an action as glorious for men as meritorious before God. . . ."

The second son of Thieu Tri, born Hoang Nham, succeeded to the throne under the name of Tu Duc (1847-1883). It was hoped that conditions for missionaries would ameliorate, since the new emperor was said to be of a mild and conciliatory character. For a short time an uneasy calm existed in Annam; then the legitimate heir, Tu Duc's eldest brother, Loang Bao, organized a revolt. Although the apostolic vicar of Cochinchina officially refused to help Loang Bao, there was Christian complicity in the rebellion, and as soon as it was crushed, Tu Duc reopened persecutions with a sweeping and deadly edict (March 21, 1851). This time the missionaries called upon the French government for aid, and the government seemed disposed to act. Internal and external politics prevented an immediate response, but in 1855 a French

mission headed by a M. de Montigny was sent to the Far East. De Montigny went first to Siam, where he successfully concluded a treaty promising freedom of worship for Christians.

The instructions given to him indicate that while the French government was prepared to intervene in Vietnam, its action would take the form of diplomatic parleys and naval menaces rather than direct reprisals. However, as had previously occurred, the local situation outraced instructions from the home government. In conjunction with the mission of M. de Montigny, the French government dispatched two ships to Tourane to await his arrival. The first to dock was the Catinat in September 1856. Its commander carried a letter addressed to the court at Hué which the mandarins refused to accept. In addition, they threatened to open fire on his vessel. Fearing the arrival of Annamite reinforcements at the fortress, the commander took the initiative and captured the fortress of Tourane. This put him in an excellent position vis-a-vis the mandarins, but he was unable to profit since M. de Montigny had not arrived. The commander of another ship, which reached Tourane in October, also found he could do nothing to ameliorate the situation. He had been told of the precarious position of the Christians by Monsignor Pellerin, apostolic vicar of Cochinchina, who risked his life to contact the commander, but the latter, deeming his further stay useless, left Tourane, taking Monsignor Pellerin with him.

M. de Montigny had intended to arrive at the same time as the two vessels and came to Tourane on January 23, 1857, immediately after concluding a treaty with Cambodia. With neither ships nor men to back him up, he failed completely to obtain the treaty of friendship, commerce, navigation, and religion which he proposed. Before he left, he wrote to Tu Duc demanding tolerance for Christians and missionaries. The message dated February 6, 1857, went further than ever before in threatening reprisals:

. . . the undersigned warns the Annamite government that if, from this date on, religious persecutions do not cease, and if there should be new executions for the mere fact of practicing the religion of France [emphasis added]. . . these acts of hostility will naturally place the Government of [His Imperial Majesty] in the obligation of taking more energetic measures.

The Montigny fiasco reduced French prestige to an all-time low and jeopardized the position of local Christians even further. Convinced that missionaries were encouraging foreign infringement of Annam's sovereignty, Tu Duc affirmed that any Vietnamese

aiding them and giving them asylum were rebels and traitors to their country. His retaliation again took the form of redoubled persecutions, especially in Tonkin.

The missionaries were aware that intensified harassment would result from M. de Montigny's threats, which he was impotent to enforce. In a letter to him written the same day as his to Tu Duc, Monsignor Pellerin and Monsignor Miche, apostolic vicar of Cambodia, pointed out their untenable position and concluded that only one path lay open to them:

No resource thus remains for us other than the generous and glorious devotion of H.M. the Emperor and his Government for the Catholic Religion and its missionaries. But if the help which we await comes late, about forty poor missionaries, your compatriots, and nearly six hundred thousand Christians will be exposed to almost certain massacre, due to the failure of the endeavor made today. . . .

These important missionaries thus squarely favored French military intervention to safeguard the Catholic position in Vietnam. The cause was pleaded by Monsignor Pellerin personally in Paris, where he found Napoleon III ready to listen to his proposals. In a letter sent to the Emperor on August 30, 1857, Monsignor Pellerin pointed out the political and economic advantages which would accrue to France by an occupation of several ports in Cochinchina, although he conceded that safeguarding the interests of Catholics in Cochinchina did not necessitate such extensive action.

Napoleon III appointed a special commission to investigate the status of the Franco-Annamite treaty of friendship of 1789 and explore possible courses of action. It found that since the terms of the treaty had not been carried out by either side, the treaty was invalid. The commission further recommended that France occupy the three principal cities of Vietnam: Hué, Hanoi, and Saigon.

Napoleon III, eager to expand French power in the Far East and fearing British predominance in this area, had already joined Britain in the second war against China in 1856. Religion played a part in the Chinese intervention, for the Emperor was ostensibly demonstrating his allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church by avenging the death of a French missionary. Thus, there was precedent for French reprisals in Annam, and Napoleon decided to seize the opportunity. With the protection of Christians abroad as his purpose, he determined to send an expedition to Cochinchina in

conjunction with the Spanish government, which wished to avenge the martyrdom of Monsignor Diaz in July 1857. The war in China ended in June 1858, and the expedition to Cochinchina could then be undertaken.

It is impossible to evaluate the extent to which persecution in Vietnam influenced Napoleon III's decision to attempt the invasion. Certainly it provided an excuse, and was a factor which he, dependent upon Church support in France, could not easily ignore. During the preceding 25 years, 7 bishops and 15 French and Spanish priests had been killed, and the Empress herself took interest in an intervention to punish the Annamese government. The mystique of a religious crusade, then, served as the basis for the expedition to Cochinchina. There had built up in France the feeling that protection of French missionaries concerned the French government, and the continuous persecution of these missionaries intimately touched upon French national honor. Yet, as a noted missionary has pointed out:

Other motives exclusively derived from national honor would have sufficed . . . without the religious question, to decide Napoleon III; the prodigious insults to our nationals, merchants or sailors; the outrages made to our flag; the expulsions of our consuls.

The sanction of a religious issue extended only to the initial French intervention.

Finally, Napoleon III in 1857 informed the world that "the ruthless persecutions of missionaries have brought our warships, on more than one occasion, to the coast of the Annamite kingdom, but their efforts to enter into relations with the government have been futile. The government of the /French/ emperor cannot allow its overtures to be spurned. Therefore, an expedition has been planned."

Spain initially cooperated with France, but essentially it was the latter that from 1858 to 1885 (plus 13 more years for pacification campaigns in Tonkin) established a variety of rule and administration over what became known as French Indochina: Laos, Cambodia, Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina.



French Rule and Vietnamese Struggles for  
Independence, 1885-1925

by

Frank N. Trager

Conquest followed by a series of treaties, the first of which was signed in 1862, permitted the French to establish direct colonial rule over Cochinchina (South Vietnam), and protectorates (treaties of 1884-1885 with China) over Annam (Central Vietnam) and Tonkin (North Vietnam). The name of the country, Vietnam, was officially abolished. In related fashion, though involving conflict with Siam and Manchu China, the French also established protectorates over Cambodia and Laos in 1863 and 1893-1895 respectively. By 1897 the French had complete mastery over these states, but did not yet have peace among their inhabitants. The Vietnamese of the Center, now called the Annamites, began their continued resistance against French rule when the Regents and Mandarins (called "Scholars") supporting Ham Nghi, the 12-year-old Emperor at Hué, attacked the French, were repulsed, and fled to the mountainous area of Ha Tinh province, and for three years successfully eluded capture. (A similar resistance to French power took place in Cambodia in 1885-1886, led by Prince Si Vaththa.) This, the hopeless revolt of the Scholars, was only the first of a series of resistance efforts.

Though it is customary to refer to "direct" and "indirect" colonial rule, these terms when applied to the French in Indochina do not reveal the substance of French administration. Cochinchina, having been the first part of the peninsula to become a French colony, was under military rule until 1879-1880, when a civil governor and a subordinate colonial council were named. The council was represented in the French Chamber of Deputies, but its members were elected primarily by French civil servants and residents in Cochinchina. Tonkin was treated in the same way, while in the protectorates of Annam, Cambodia, and Laos, the semblance of emperor and kingly rule was allowed to exist. Controls and effective power resided in France and in the French appointees.

Before 1893, the Ministry of Marine and the Ministry of Commerce alternatively and competitively were charged with this responsibility. In that year the affairs of Indochina were placed under the authority of the newly created French Ministry of Colonies. (This was reorganized in 1911 as the General Agency of Colonies.) Until World War II the Ministry of Colonies held jurisdiction over the Governor-General for Indochina. In turn the latter governed through a series of Chief Residents who were in charge of local administration in the colony of Cochinchina (which also had a direct governor) and in the protectorates which retained the nominal headship of the emperor or king. All Mandarins (local) were subordinated to the French Residents and French-dominated local councils.<sup>1</sup>

As indicated, resistance to French rule and rebellions against it began almost immediately with the imposition of full French power and administration. Four years after the suppression of the Scholars' revolt, a more serious one was organized by Le De Tham, "The Tiger of Yen The," who presumably capitulated in 1897--but who in fact proved troublesome to the French throughout the first decade of the 20th Century. De Tham, permitted to rule in a section of northern Tonkin, became almost a legendary figure for his ability to hold off the French. Nationalism as we speak of it today certainly had its origins in Vietnam in the waning years of the 19th Century. Movements were organized by the deposed or belittled Vietnamese emperors, by their loyal civil servants, the Mandarins, and by other patriotic Vietnamese who were willing to fight against French colonialism and its denigration or destruction of Vietnamese traditional society. How much popular support these movements acquired is debatable, but that they had or later acquired some popular support is clear, for otherwise they could not have been organized, led, and animated by the elite or educated groups whose initial responsibility they usually were and whose inspiration in most cases called them forth.

The French were willing to use the Mandarins and other Vietnamese as intermediaries between themselves and the general public, but they always used them in positions inferior to those held by the French and always continued to regard them as untrustworthy. In doing this they thought they were introducing French administration, French civilization, French law and custom--all, of course, superior by definition and decree to the indigenous variety. They thus continued to alienate those who might have helped them build a new bridge to a multiracial and more egalitarian society which in high theory the French espoused. And they deepened the antagonism of those others who never would cooperate with that more paternalistic notion of French colonial policy, to wit, that France carried to Indochina its "civilizing mission."

Sixty-five years after the first Scholars' revolt a Vietnamese, Doan Quan Tan, not unfriendly to the French, spoke at the Alliance Française of Indochina (April 16, 1949). Even then he could say:<sup>2</sup>

But here and now the people of our country are jostled and bullied; rights are claimed and satisfaction is given; the French administrator, the French colonial, the French shop-keeper, all have to do with an all-powerful French administration inclined to favour them. "It's only human," say the French, indulgently. "It's inhuman," is the opinion of the Vietnamese, the butt of this unequal treatment, ill-used in their own land, by strangers whom they consider as guests. In short, some speak of rights, but only for themselves, the lot of duty falls on other shoulders. On one side are all the civic and political rights, and the liberties that ensue. On the other side, nothing. Not even the right to justice or to equity. However intelligent, all their lives the Vietnamese have been relegated to inferior posts; they had never the right to administrate a province; except for a few rare exceptions, they could never become the judges of their own countrymen; though fulfilling the same office and doing the same work, they never got but ten seventeenths of their French colleague's salary. Not a few high-up civil servants of the Viet-Nam earned less than a French gendarme. But why, you will probably ask me, did the Vietnamese never protest instead of waiting, instead of putting up with the injustices, the blunders and humiliations, instead of shutting themselves up in their silence; only to burst out all of a sudden? How could they protest? We hadn't the right to vote, the Cochinchinese deputy was elected by the French and the Hindus, which latter were, as we have explained, French citizens, imported for the purpose of the elections and royally rewarded from funds . . . acquired in Indo-China.

And this is the explanation, in brutal terms, of our present conflict.

As we shall see, Doan Quan Tan was a good analyst of the ailment but not a good historian. For the protests were made repeatedly and repeatedly suppressed.

## FRENCH ADMINISTRATION AND VIETNAMESE PROTESTS

While sporadic armed resistance continued through the end of the 19th Century, the bloody struggle of conquest, which had lasted for almost three decades, was considered ended by 1900, a year which passed unmarred by serious rebel activity. With victory secure, the French in 1897 dispatched Paul Doumer, an administrative and financial expert, to the colony, with the avowed purpose of making it economically self-sufficient. It should be noted that between the "rule of the Admirals" in Cochinchina (1861-1879) and the arrival of Doumer several Governors-General had intervened. Only one of them, Paul Bert, who died early in office, had shown any sympathetic understanding for the plight of the Vietnamese.

Doumer, who later became President of France, was eminently equipped for this job and succeeded in setting an irreversible pattern by which Indochina was to develop not according to its own needs, but in accordance with the 19th-Century colonial concept, in a functional relationship to France. In 1898 he unified the administration of the five states by obtaining a general budget and setting up general services, all directly responsible to the Governor-General. The local state budgets were balanced with direct taxes. The general budget, financed with indirect taxation, was devised to support an ambitious program of many new long-term developmental projects, including mines, roads, bridges, and railroads and harbors, thereby laying the foundation for the infrastructure of the newly organized colony.

In the zeal of his purely organizational approach, Doumer imposed many hardships on the local population which brought them no tangible benefits. His most unpopular measures were government salt and alcohol monopolies which touched the daily lives of the peasants. All the peasants depended on cheap salt in their daily diet, many depended upon its production and marketing for their livelihood, and alcohol was necessary for their traditional rites. During his five-year term he had little, if any, inclination to develop a policy which would involve the Vietnamese. He was indifferent to popular clamor for education, and discontent spread among the educated at his policy of employing French personnel even on the lowest administrative level of government. The keynote of his administration was the 19th-Century French policy of assimilation, which had the long-range goal of turning Vietnamese into Frenchmen. As Virginia Thompson pointed out, "The political and cultural assimilation of a colony was favored by an overwhelming majority in the late 19th Century. This involved the destruction of existing native institutions, and their

replacement by those prevalent in France, with an inevitable substitution of language. It was believed that the mere knowledge of French would bring an insatiable thirst for French ideas and manufactures."<sup>3</sup> By the end of Doumer's term the destructive aspect of the policy had succeeded admirably, but no efforts had been made to create new Vietnamese institutions to fill the void.

It was his successor, Governor-General Paul Beau (1902-1907), who fell heir to the problem of the "moral conquest" of the Vietnamese people. His genuine concern for the indigenes was manifested in some humanitarian medical efforts, abolishment of corporal punishment, and enunciation of a "revolutionary" educational policy, which was revolutionary only in that it was a first step in a field in which no action had been taken by the French so far. Beau appointed a director of public education, created a Franco-Vietnamese curriculum, started sending gifted students to France, and cautiously opened some lower-rank administrative jobs to the Vietnamese. His reforms were too late, too superficial, and too mild. Three years of bad harvests and fundamental discontent with the high taxes, corrupt tax collectors, and monopolies aggravated peasant misery.

In the middle of Beau's term of office occurred the event which was to give nationalist sentiment a new direction and new courage: the Japanese victory over Russia. Up to this point the French had studiously ignored counsel against a policy of repression and exploitation. They had assumed from their military victory a mandate to proceed with colonization without fear of serious opposition. Arms had in fact been the only form of resistance offered by the Indochinese peoples. That opposition derived in part from the Old Scholars, high-ranking members of the mandarin class who had most to lose by French conquest; who sought to preserve the monarchy and their traditional Confucian ideals and systems, fighting in small armed bands, with little organization and little sense of national purpose. At the turn of the century, however, the seepage of western ideas through the French and through Annam's traditional teacher, China, inspired a new form of resistance. The new nationalist leaders, drawn from the educated elite, or lettrés, held out modernization as their unanimous goal, although they held differing political philosophies.

Now with the victory of Japan over a white European power, Vietnamese students turned to Japan's schools and in turn sent letters and pamphlets back home. These in the words of one self-styled "obscure student" were designed to show how Japan had "been able to conquer the impotent Europeans"; to enlist

other Vietnamese students to come to Japan and to join forces with the "six hundred" already there who in turn had as their "only aim" to "prepare the population /In Vietnam/ for the future." One of these "students" was Phan Bội Châu, who had been a supporter of Phan Dinh Phung. The latter had in turn fought for an imperial restoration after the defeat of Emperor Ham Nghi and his Scholars in 1888. Phan Boi Chau is a major link in this nationalist chain to Japan and back to Vietnam. His first defiant political pamphlet, "Letters Written in Blood," had been published in 1903, in a traditional Chinese literary form with allusions understood only by the educated elite. By 1905 he had decided that Japan, which he had already visited, would lead the colonial Asian nations out of bondage. He returned from Tokyo with the firm belief in a society built on modern, rational, and scientific concepts like Japan, and with reinforced faith in his idea of restoring the monarchy, also based on the Japanese example. He brought home the idea that Japan would aid his cause. Chau attracted a great following among the young. He organized a "secret" revolutionary society known as the Vietnam Modernization League; and he sponsored into exile in Japan one of the great early nationalist figures, Prince Nguyen Cuong De. These rebels did not get what they hoped for from either China or Japan--that is direct aid to oust the French--but their clandestine activity inside Vietnam again erupted in 1908 in Tonkin and Annam.

In that year these returned students plotted unsuccessfully to poison the French garrison at Hué. They then agitated publicly "for the day when France will relinquish Indochina." The activity continued until the French arrested the leaders in 1910. The next year the Chinese Revolution began, instigated by the "Young China" group of Sun Yat-sen and others who had previously found refuge and support in Hanoi. Violence again broke out in Vietnam, while Phan Boi Chau, from Canton, organized what became the major fountainhead of successive nationalist organizations, the Vietnam Restoration League, and proclaimed a Provisional Government of the Republic of Annam. In 1913-1914 the French military suppressed all dissidence and succeeded in killing De Tham, who had been one of the leaders of armed struggle since 1897.

The factors that gave rise to Vietnamese nationalism and then, later, to communism are easy to see and to diagnose. In the first place, the Vietnamese did not want to be dominated by the French any more than they wanted domination by the Chinese. Nationalism in a "colonial" country begins as a revolt against alien power. Whatever political, racial, cultural, economic, or religious factors go into it, it is always a revolt against alien power.

The pre-European, pre-French economy of Indochina, as in most of mainland Southeast Asia, was based primarily on subsistence production for the indigenous population. Rice and other food products, edible oils from kernels, fruit, fish, woods, weaving, and semiprecious, precious, and other mining constituted the staples of the empire. Rice was seldom if ever exported. But fish, nuts, ebony, ivory, turtle shells, and lacquers were among the products exchanged in the coastal trade of Vietnam's China Sea ports.

The arrival of the French as empire-builders in the 1860s, the opening of the Suez Canal, the use of imported Chinese labor and capital transformed this subsistence economy into an extractive one owned and managed by the French. Rice and rubber became the major items of export for the world market, with raw silk, pepper, tobacco, and other products being imported into France for French domestic consumption. There is no doubt that the French improved the quantity and quality of rice production, contributing thereby to the fact that French Indochina became before World War II the third largest exporter of that item after Burma and Thailand. Also the French developed both the rubber plantations and the extensive coal mines at Hongay and elsewhere in North Vietnam. Tonkin became the so-called "industrial" north while the south became the granary for the whole country. This condition was inherited by the Communist north and the democratic south after 1954.

The French built a variety of roads connecting the two parts of the country and the economy. They, like other imperialist powers in the 19th Century, engaged in public works, public health, and sanitation primarily in the major cities where the colonial administrative and managerial elements were to live. They not only introduced new and better crops, as indicated above, but also improved irrigation, canals, and other elements which helped both production and marketing.

But the changeover from a subsistence economy to a commercial one brought undesirable effects to the countryside. Landlordism gradually got control of the major crop-producing areas --so much so that before the French departed they and the Chinese moneylenders, who constituted less than 3% of the population, owned about 50% of the Mekong Delta rice lands. The peasant farmer who formerly had a use-title to his land became a debt-ridden tenant farmer or farm laborer, or joined the displaced urban "lumpen proletariat." As in Burma, the indigenous 80% rural population --mainstay of the country--became less and less rooted peasants. The benefits of their land and their labor went to the foreigner --French or Chinese.



France had invested heavily in Indochina but the investment primarily benefited the French and France. Only a very thin top layer of Vietnamese acquired French culture, French citizenship, and a share in the new money economy grafted onto the subsistence economy of the rural masses. As Furnivall pointed out in his classic work on Burma, where the same conditions prevailed, the Indochinese rural masses paid taxes, had little if any say in the government, gradually lost their rights to the land, and found their traditional, commune-autonomous village system disrupted by foreign economic, legal, and socio-cultural modes.

There was hardly ever a time during the period of French encroachment and then domination when nationalist-minded or patriotic Vietnamese leaders could not rally to their banner other Vietnamese, including both educated elites and more or less illiterate followers in the countryside. Even the French-educated Vietnamese elites found few opportunities for participating in the French regime in Vietnam except in positions that were inferior in both power and pay. Progressive self-government was not an aim of Paris for the colony. French colonial administration amounted to rule by French officials in Paris, Hanoi, and Saigon. Though some Vietnamese were grudgingly appointed to the so-called consultative bodies, these were limited to a docile minority of French beneficiaries.

In this atmosphere of deprivation Vietnamese nationalism easily flourished. As in other Southeast Asian colonies, existing indigenous patriotism, whether Burmese, Vietnamese, or Indonesian, was fed not only by the Japanese victory over Russia and the Chinese Republican victory of Sun Yat-sen, but also by the Russian Revolution and above all by ideas of democratic and Marxist revolutionary education, derived from the West, in this case from France.

In 1883-1885, as we have seen, a "secret" society--in the Chinese mode--organized around the displaced mandarin, launched an abortive revolt in the name of the Vietnamese emperor. In this, the Scholars' revolt failed. But it took the French some 14 years to bring the countryside of Tonkin and Annam back to "peace."

Such revolts continued in the next decade, always contributing some Vietnamese figure to the roster of anti-French heroes. Phan Boi Chau helped to establish a dual pattern for displaced and escaping nationalist figures. Some went to Southern China, especially to the Canton area, which became a center for Vietnamese nationalism and later communism; others went to Japan, where they received overt and covert assistance and training, especially after 1905. In both places "secret" Vietnamese societies flourished.

And in Vietnam their followers and supporters engaged in anti-French agitation by various means, e.g., the Tonkin Free School movement and the Hair-Cutters movement. These movements were suppressed by the French and their leaders exiled. One such leader, exiled to France, was Phan Chu Trinh, who became the teacher of young Vietnamese brought or sent to France during World War I. One of his pupils was Nguyen Ai Quoc--better known to us as Ho Chi Minh.

The 1910s and the 1920s witness the continuation of these nationalist movements under one or another of various Vietnamese heroes. Agitation, strikes, terror, and insurrection continue to be their instruments--interrupted occasionally by peaceful interludes.

### A MODERATE FRENCH VIEW OF VIETNAMESE

#### PROTEST MOVEMENTS

It may be instructive for us today to see this same story of Vietnamese struggles for freedom from the vantage point of reasonable Frenchmen who advised a policy of enlightened rule and cooperation with patriotic, nationalist Vietnamese elements. One such voice was that of the Comité de L'Asie Française. Founded in 1901 with Eugene Etienne, a Cabinet Minister and Senator, as its first President, it adopted as its purpose the aspiration of constituting "a unifying center of economic, diplomatic, ethnic, social, and religious information which is needed for reasoned action in face of the problems of the Levant and the Far East." It published until 1940 what became a distinguished journal, Asie Française, beginning in April 1901. The journal chronicled the events in Indochina (and the Near and Far East in general), and from time to time published articles dealing with the Vietnamese resistance movement and its aspirations. Its founding statement, written for the first issue by Etienne, enunciated the primary aim of "insuring the economic prosperity of the country and especially the willing cooperation of the natives with their French political teachers." The intent of this policy was in part based on concern for the subject peoples, but prompted also by fear that the ferment in China might endanger French interests in Asia. "The time has come for France to have a definite Asian policy, conscious of herself. The Chinese crisis, just begun, will not fail to change profoundly for better or for worse, the situation of people with interests in Asia." The Comité foresaw the strengthening of China as a threat to French rule in Indochina, and urged consistently that

Indochina be made an "organisme animé d'une vie propre," able to survive by herself without having to drain metropolitan France. The journal would inform public opinion in France about events in Asia, in order to give it a sense of the future and provide a factual basis for the foundation of a cohesive, long-range colonial policy. It recognized the dangerous tendency in a democracy to destroy continuity in policy, and hoped to counteract this feature of a system of government where power rests on the changing will of its people.

It should be useful here to recount the activities of the early Vietnamese nationalists, as they were presented to the readers of Asie Française (hereafter, AF), in the years 1900-1925, i.e., those covered in this section.

The first such series of social and political articles, usually unsigned and headed "Lettres de l'Indochine," appeared in May 1906, when the effect of the Japanese victory was starting to be felt. The initial letter simply noted the development of some political consciousness among the peasants of Tonkin. AF also noted the loss of prestige suffered by the King of Annam among Tonkinese peasants, in comparison with the glorified public image of Governor-General Beau, who made a greater impression on them with his new educational policy. While AF points out that the mass of the people were still far from thoughts of deposing the monarchy, murmurs were heard among the peasantry favoring more direct rule as exercised in Cochinchina. The feeling existed, it is asserted, that the indigenous rulers were in any case mere French puppets and an unnecessary expense. At the time of the Emperor's visit to the seat of his ancestors near Hanoi, many peasants were heard expressing the superstitious fear that his presence there might cause bad harvests.

In noting this reaction, AF suggested that an important effect of French domination, under the pressure of modern ideas, was to bring about a transformation among the whole of Annamite society. Where it was possible, the French had tried during the early stages of the conquest to preserve and work through some of the local institutions and mandarinates. But the Confucian tradition rested on an ethic of immutability, which alone had permitted it to last until the French conquest. The mandarinates were corrupt and self-seeking; faced with foreign domination, some mandarins turned to armed resistance, but more abandoned their moral and educative role in the society, and either fled or collaborated with the French, discrediting themselves in the eyes of the people. The monarchy had not escaped degradation either, for by one method or another, the French always assured themselves of a cooperative "sovereign." With all the traditional

sources of authority in their society discredited, the Vietnamese (called Annamites) were thus susceptible to new ideas and institutions. In June 1908 AF was at pains to point out that the Vietnamese had not found this "good mother" in the French administration. In another letter much discontent among the peasantry was described. The great economic changes in the country had not affected the masses; railroads were being built, but hunger was rife; the cost of living had skyrocketed due to inflation; and the major objects of bitterness were the alcohol and salt monopolies, and unequal taxes which hit the peasants hardest. A Tonkinese was quoted as observing that the peasant was not thinking of revolt, since he was used to domination. Hence, this same spokesman added, the peasant would as willingly accept Japanese domination as French, and France should not count on the Annamites to prevent Japan from taking over their country if such an attempt were made.

This prophetic note was picked up the following month in an article headed "L'Evolution de l'esprit annamite." The author described an important body of local opinion which deserved notice--that of the lettered Tonkinese. Two types were defined: classic Chinese scholars, and more significant, those who were Western oriented. He pointed out that the French were creating a dangerous class of uprooted intellectuals who had high aspirations and had overcome strong family and social opposition to obtain Western education. Their achievement had not been recognized by the colonials, and Vietnamese society still gave classic scholars more respect. In 1904 some administrative positions had been opened to them, but these jobs offered no responsibilities and were usually only for translators. Furthermore, the youths whom the French had permitted to be educated in France were exposed there to a democratic society and treated well. Upon their return to Vietnam they were held in contempt by French colonials and treated as "boys."

AF attributed the growing popularity of Western education primarily to the example of Japan, which had achieved so much success in applying the techniques learned from the West against it. Additional spurs were the introduction of quoc-ngu (romanized Vietnamese) and the example of the Chinese empress who had just embarked on a program of reforms. Public desire to learn was intense. In 1904 Chinese newspapers had been banned in Tonkin, which had the effect of increasing their popularity. Other widespread literature, in Chinese translations, included the works of Rousseau, Voltaire, and histories of Europe and Japan. The influence of Phan Boi Chau in particular was cited, in regard to the importance attached to Western education. His pamphlet exhorting Vietnamese youth to study is reprinted, along with an

anonymous pamphlet circulating in Tonkin, and a popular song, which were causing a stir among the youth.

Chau's "Advice to the Young to Study Abroad," which was "written in tears," derides his countrymen for their ignorance. We are human beings like the Japanese, writes Chau, exhorting Vietnamese to organize aid societies to send their youth abroad to Japan to study. The anonymous pamphlet, written probably by one of Chau's followers, calls the Vietnamese fools, who deserve the treatment they are getting at the hands of the French. It urges the youth to study and learn the talents the Japanese have acquired, and thus prepare to reconquer Annam.

The "chanson populaire" has a more bitter and political tone. It extols the Japanese emperor as a glorious wise prince who has reformed his nation and inspired the sentiment of national solidarity. The Annamite king is by contrast called a "wooden statue." It accuses the French of keeping Annamites in darkness and decries the foreign character of all impetus for modernization in Vietnam. In true French romantic literary style the author cries "Awake, Annam. Call forth a new education and national solidarity."

On the question of Vietnamese education, AF spotlighted the issue which according to Virginia Thompson<sup>4</sup> provided the first forum for nationalist agitation in the 20th Century. "Learning, not revolution was the byword of the great majority before 1914." In mentioning for the first time the name Phan Boi Chau, it named the individual who personified at least for the first two decades of the 20th Century the political character of the Vietnamese resistance. AF was unaware that the author of the "Advice to Study" had been organizing loyalist bands against the French since 1900.

In September 1906, AF examined "L'Etat des esprits en Cochinchine" and found the new educated class there also chafing under French subordination and turning for inspiration to Japan. A Cochinchinese expressed to the reporter their pleasure in the proof offered by the Japanese that "there was some value in yellow skin." This spokesman showed a growing pride of race when he spoke bitterly about the pressured resignation of a "native" who had been accidentally elected to the Vice Presidency of the Cochinchinese Colonial Council. (AF had earlier reported and deplored the incident.)

The author criticized French policy, stating: "We try to put ourselves on a pedestal, but our acts lower us to the level of the crowd." The Cochinchinese did not respect their representatives in elected councils, he said, viewing them rather as French puppets. He asserted that the French were creating still another

class of malcontents: the unrecognized children of French men and local women. They were also overburdening the peasants with the salt and alcohol monopolies, feeding their desire to revolt, and filling the ranks of the secret societies. The constitution of one of the numerous secret societies fell into the hands of AF and is reprinted. These are seen as especially dangerous because of their ties with the Chinese societies. The most invidious feature is their brutality, exemplified by the best known, the "Société du Ciel et de la Terre" in Saigon. The author calls attention to the frequent murder of Vietnamese who refuse to join and cites the brutal punishment meted out to those who refuse to abide by the decisions of the society, and to those who betray it. If AF misjudged the extent of Chinese influence in the secret societies, it was correct in underlining the growing importance of the societies themselves, which multiplied rapidly and provided a haven for nationalist agitators.

AF continued in October 1906 to attempt to get at the root of Vietnamese feelings revealed since the Japanese victory. It was found a difficult task because the local councilors were "useless" as true representatives. Either they were too fearful to express themselves, or had no knowledge of the French language, in which discussions were conducted. The lack of and great need for an effective channel for indigenous opinion was emphasized, and the author called again for reform of taxes and their fraudulent collection. These taxes went mostly for the public works, which were for the benefit of France, not the "natives," he pointed out. He also called attention to the people's tremendous desire for education, and urged that they be trained for full cooperation in government. The desire was already there, he said. Japan and Rousseau's ideas had already showed them the road.

The author saw it as dangerous not to encourage a complete policy of association. This was the name given to the increasingly popular theory that there was some value in Annamite culture, at least for the Annamites, and that the French should try to adapt it to modern times, and work with it and the people, rather than continue to follow their destructive policy of assimilation. By 1905 in France, there was a formidable amount of criticism of assimilation, which had succeeded in destroying much of the foundation of Vietnamese society and culture, but had replaced it with nothing. Governor-General Beau's educational efforts were seen a step in the associationist direction. The French colonials in Indochina were violently opposed to any policy of cooperation that might raise the level of the Vietnamese to challenge their supremacy. They advanced a series of arguments against it, which the writer in AF systematically refutes.



"Nothing in the organization of this people is opposed to level by level rapprochement with us." He discounts the influence of conservative Chinese thought in Annam, noting that since the Chinese reforms, and since the Japanese victory, the Annamites see these two Asian powers as on the same path as the West. Religion is not necessarily divisive, he says. The Chinese family-based ethic is not properly a religion or a culture that would defy modern society. The author adds that politically, before the French came, the Vietnamese never constituted a solid group from Tonkin to Cochinchina. Annam and Tonkin were rivals. Under the French, Cochinchina grew away from the Hué emperor. Tonkin is also growing away, but not toward alliance with Cochinchina. "If a union of Annamite spirits occurs, it will be under our eyes, and if it is against us, it will be our fault."

AF gives a voice to some Vietnamese exponents of the policy of cooperation. In "Cahiers annamites," "a group of Annamites" state: "For fifty years we have suffered under a policy of domination, which has created a gulf between masters and subjects which grows bigger every day, inciting hatred and leading to bloodshed." They add that France understands this and beg her to work for our "physical and moral uplifting, like the Americans in the Philippines. . . . We do not intend to be slaves forever. We want to be treated like men." This letter, written in excellent French, ends on a sarcastic note, with a plea for the reader to excuse their French, since they were only permitted a primary education.

An extract from another local letter is also offered, decrying unjust accusations of disloyalty against the Vietnamese. The writer advises that if the French treated them well and showed respect for their educated compatriots, they would remain loyal.

The most effective spokesman and leader of the educated Vietnamese who hoped to achieve modernization and eventual independence through collaboration with the French was another lettré, Phan Chau Trinh. He, like Phan Boi Chau, had been travelling up and down his country, calling for the awakening of national energies and deriding the corrupt mandarins. In August 1906 he had addressed an open letter to Governor-General Beau which, while decrying the obvious evils of French administration, was of enormous importance in that it was, according to Le Than Khoi,<sup>5</sup> the first local expression of rejection of the antique monarchical system. Trinh signalled the birth of the "reformist" movement by setting up a republican ideal and calling for participation of the masses and a modern economy; he offered to collaborate with the French in working toward these goals. This letter somehow escaped the attention of AF, but it remarked Trinh's influence



in a brief, intense period of educational activity in 1907 and 1908. In June 1907 AF applauded the founding of several education societies and schools, under the leadership of the Free School of Tonkin. This school, inspired by Phan Chau Trinh's principles, rapidly attracted over 1,000 students. It offered a free education in three languages, and in French, Chinese, and Vietnamese national culture, the exact sciences, and political economy. Another "Society of Encouragement for Secondary, Superior, and Professional Education" was founded, which AF found worthy of French support. The French, however, suppressed this society because its purpose was to send students abroad. They ignored the intent of this group to send its youth to France and assumed it was Japanese oriented, like the illegal activities of Phan Boi Chau.

The Free School of Tonkin originally had the support of the French; but it possessed its own printing press and was emboldened by its success to print nationalist propaganda. The French closed its doors after eight months, imprisoning its leaders at Poulo Condore, an island the French transformed into a prison camp for political offenders.

In May 1908, AF signalled some "Troubles indigenes" in its monthly news summary. It said the local press had been talking for several weeks of an unusual movement in the four central Annamite provinces. The nature of this peasant movement was difficult to determine. It had been issuing a peaceful call for moral reform while apparently engaged in stealing from rich Annamites. The peasants sported short hair, i.e., were modernizing by cutting off their traditional queues, which AF noted seemed to be the principal sign of reform in the Far East. AF attributed the movement to discontent with taxes and the inflammatory effect of students in and returning from Japan. Generally, the peasants seemed to direct their ire against the mandarins, without challenging French authority. This strange manifestation was quickly repressed by government troops, and Phan Chau Trinh was arrested as its leader and condemned to die (he was later exiled instead to France). AF points out that if he was behind the demonstration, his past indicated that he was really against the mandarins and not the French. The author refers to a curious pamphlet by Trinh published in the June 1907 issue of Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise de l'Extrême Orient, in which he blamed the mandarins for the misery and stupidity of the Vietnamese people. He ascribed their misery to three causes: too much authority remaining in the hands of the mandarins; French contempt for all Vietnamese; and misunderstandings between the French and the "natives," perpetuated by the mandarins for their own interest.

The following month AF again discussed the peasant demonstration in its monthly review. It noted that measures taken for order ("repression is too severe a term") had avoided violence. The movement was serious enough, however, to seek the motive. Phan Chau Trinh, who was seen behind it, announced that he was not hostile to a France which modernized Annam. If this is so, how can we modernize, asked the author? Should we dispose of the mandarin state, or align with the mandarin minority who want to enthrone a constitutional emperor at Hué? Without going further into this question, the author urged that the most needed reforms be effected: that the method of tax collection be reformed, the salt monopoly be abolished, and the French functionaries in the colony be required to learn the Vietnamese language.

In August 1908 AF chronicled the continuance of local manifestations in the form of a poison plot at the Hanoi garrison. In contrast to the colonials' hysteria, AF played down the plot and called it just a warning. The author found that the colonials had grossly exaggerated its character. The guilty ones were sentenced to death, and that should be the end of it. It was not until the following March that AF treated the matter more fully, at which time the trial of one of the plotters revealed the hitherto unsuspected links among all the Vietnamese manifestations of the last few years.

In March 1909, in an article on Le De Tham, AF announced that the old rebel chief had finally been crushed, although he personally was not yet captured. The author attributes the government's final and successful routing of his band to the hysteria caused by the Hanoi poison plot. The French were worried by the dangerous legends growing up around him. He controlled a virtually independent principality in the brush, in the province of Yen-the, whose geography favored his movements. He had become a sort of national hero favored by the lettrés, especially the Japan-centered group, that is by Phan Boi Chau and Prince Cuong De, now recognized as a king by the other two.

Thus, AF reveals, the De Tham question was joined to the question of native agitation. As for the Hanoi poison plot, this was also the joint work of Chau and De Tham. Some lettrés attracted the "native" soldiers in the Hanoi garrison to a pseudo-education society. They were enrolled in legitimist troops De Tham pretended to form. De Tham spoke to them as the general of the exiled king preparing for war. He led the soldiers to believe that Chau and Cuong De had written that the war should take place that year. Elaborate rites and rituals were set up for the would-be army, especially at the garrison. The author points out that despite the ridiculous supposition that the Hanoi troops alone could

overthrow the French, the plotters were able to play on the superstition of the people and support them. The idea was often "revealed" that the Japanese would come to aid their cause.

When the story "broke," on June 27, 1908, the conspiracy was at least ten months old. The poison plot turned out a tragedy-comedy. While it did little real harm (it was discovered before the poison caused any injury), it raised the cry for heads among the French. AF placed this plot in the "pure tradition of Annamite revolutions." Few Vietnamese soldiers were actually involved, and it never constituted any real threat. But it could have snowballed if not for the quick trials and the end of De Tham's power.

The French hysteria had resulted in the closing of the newly opened University of Hanoi and many other local educational institutions. AF continued in its analysis by criticizing this reaction. It asserted that all the lettrés involved in the plots had been from the old school: "Phobias dominate our colonial policy." Revolutionary ideas could enter the country in a thousand other ways besides French language schools, the article continued. Closing schools which offered modern education would not prevent the growth of anti-French feeling. "We must be reconciled to the fact that native intellectuals will never be very favorable to us." The author also added that the Japanese government had no hand in the native movements. Japan had been extremely suspect after her victory, but in 1907 had signed a treaty with France which guaranteed the security of the latter's Asian interests. "We must stop seeing an evil Japanese fairy behind Indochinese agitation."

The years between 1908 and 1913 were not marked by serious manifestations of nationalist resistance. Phan Boi Chau and Prince Cuong De remained in Japan until they were expelled in 1910, and thereafter in China and Siam; Phan Chau Trinh, whose death sentence was commuted in 1908, was permitted to live in Paris.

In March 1910, AF published "une opinion annamite sur la domination française" by Hoang Cao Khai, a member of the Conseil Supérieur de l'Indochine and the Legion of Honor, who was in favor of collaboration and believed that the French domination could be turned into a benefit for Indochina. His major thesis was that Annam should turn to France for guidance. No good purpose could be served by turning to Japan, he felt, pointing to the misery of Korea under Japanese rule. He advised his countrymen to stay with France, because independence would come. He argued

pragmatically that the average Frenchman, with his comparatively high standard of living, would not want to colonize the area and that the French were bound now to foster a more liberal policy because they wanted Indochina to remain loyal and be able to defend itself against Asian aggressors. He looked forward to the day in 50 to 100 years, when modern education should have enlightened all his compatriots, and France would have granted them internal autonomy. AF did not comment on the views expressed here. It would appear that this spokesman was either an example of thorough assimilation, or sincerely taken in by French oratory.

August 1912 was marked by the assassinations of two Frenchmen, both isolated incidents. The following month AF quoted Lieutenant Governor M. Destenay as denouncing the Siamese and Chinese he said coming into Annam and Tonkin, and stirring up nationalist emotions in favor of the Annamite reformists. M. Destenay noted, however, that one root of nationalist discontent was continued failure to recognize the achievements of educated "natives." He advised sardonically that it would be better to close the schools than to keep up this disastrous policy.

Later in the year (December), AF chronicled and applauded an order issued to the chiefs of the general services to stop the practice of "tutoyer" of natives. Low-grade French civil servants had been addressing Vietnamese who worked in their offices, many of whom had advanced degrees earned in France, with the language forms suitable for children and servants.

If the relative quiet on the surface of these years led to complacency, the events of 1913 were to prove that Vietnamese resistance was not dead. AF first signalled this with a brief mention that on April 26 a bomb had been thrown in Hanoi, and that the act had been done by the followers of Cuong De, like the 1908 plot. "Unfortunately," it continued, "such acts can find an echo in a population which cannot be happy with our native policy, as recently proved by the decision of the Governor-General in the alcohol affair [i.e., restoration of a government monopoly]." In the same issue AF reported and deplored the raiding of the tomb of the Emperor Tu Duc, apparently by some French colonials in search of the treasure hidden there. AF condemns the Resident Supérieur of Annam, who permitted this to happen, revealing "his complete ignorance of the native soul."

The next month AF presented a long feature on "La Bombe de Hanoi," written by Charles Fournier-vailly. He also attributed the bomb to the revolutionaries grouped around Chau and Cuong De and presented two schools of thought on the way to solve the problem of local discontent and agitation. He first gave the account

of a meeting held by the French of Cochinchina urging the government to re-establish severe local justice (comparable to that which had been imposed in 1908) to avoid further incidents. These colonials attributed the native troubles to the misguided humanitarianism and liberalism of Governor-General Sarraut, much as they had blamed the 1908 disturbances on the "pro-native" policies of Paul Beau, who was recalled just a few weeks before those demonstrations occurred.

The opposing point of view on how to handle the situation was presented in the same issue by excerpts from a letter from Phan Chau Trinh, published originally in a Paris newspaper. Trinh proclaimed that he had foreseen this tragedy. He said he had made his views known to Messimy, the Minister of Colonies, and to Governor-General Sarraut.

I told them that if they did not give the people of Annam the reforms they promised, there would be much to fear. That was twenty months ago. Since, they have done some small things for the Annamites, but their efforts were like giving candy to a baby to erase the sting of blows he had received; the alcohol monopoly was renewed, although they promised it would not be; the patriots imprisoned in Poulo Condore perished while they were promised grace; the education we call for is always refused; the contempt in which we are held is ever increased, and now they add new faults to these old ones: they violate the sacred tomb of Tu Duc for money! The people of Annam want to learn, to be respected . . . they want little by little to emancipate themselves. On this point, do you not think it is to France's interest to come to an understanding with the Annamites? The day when the people of Annam, instructed by France, will obtain from her, normally, their autonomy, France, who will have prepared us for liberty, who will have given it to us, will conserve with us all her interests and we will love her as friends and allies.

The author finds Trinh's views extreme and claims that he cannot represent the whole of "native opinion." He attacks his points one by one in a much more hard-headed fashion than AF had previously used in regard to nationalist sentiment. Fournier-Vailly fears that Trinh and other French-educated Vietnamese do not believe sincerely in the good intentions of France relative to self-government. He cites an inflammatory pamphlet written in 1907 against certain Annamite notables who had founded a scholarship program for study in France. The crux of its message was:

Twenty years ago our compatriots lived in a profound sleep. They were awakened suddenly by the Russo-Japanese War, and many Annamites went to Japan to work for the independence of Annam. The French could not stop this exodus. They tried to use the mandarins, and even effected some educational reforms. But even the educated were kept enslaved. You are taking your enemies as school masters. The French are keeping us ignorant of science. The French will never instruct Annamites and lead them to progress. You are wasting your time and money.

The author assured himself that Annamite opinion had changed a little since then, in response to some real gains achieved by the French, particularly in medicine. As for education, he advocated professional education, but sputtered that "some of them have the presumption to demand the baccalaureate," and see themselves called to high destinies. He added that the French in Indochina were defeating the good intentions of the French in France. The colonials distrust educated Vietnamese. He concluded by justifying French experience in Indochina and asserted that not only would the French lose all if the "natives ruled," but that they would relapse to their ancient Chinese ways; French institutions could not have penetrated so fast.

A follow-up chronicle in September 1913 on the sanctions imposed for the bomb plot asserted that 85 had been condemned; if sanctions against the plotters had not been taken immediately, this would have been the biggest conspiracy in Tonkin. It was well organized and aimed to chase the French out of the country. The plotters intended to have a series of blows killing all the great local civil and military leaders loyal to France, then to pass into Tonkin with an army of Annamite revolutionaries. The inquiry of the revived Criminal Commission showed that the source of the conspiracy was in the traditional lettrés; but the author adds that we must not conclude that the new-style students are necessarily loyal subjects. He pointed out that Phan Chau Trinh, operating in Paris, was having an effect on Annamite students in France.

Late in December 1913 one Lieutenant J. Coulon discussed the effects of the Chinese Revolution in Cochinchina. Some malcontents followed the events with passion, he said, but the young Cochinchinese who think are not Sinophiles. They intend to drive the Chinese out of their position of economic dominance. In the same issue the editors noted that the Lieutenant Governor had taken measures to stop a curious movement of revolutionary propaganda, the distribution of clandestine money. This revolutionary



money was marked good after "the event" which was to occur in about two years. It was to be suppressed, with severe punishment for its distributors.

Charles Fournier-Vailly again discussed Annamite loyalty in January 1914. He confirmed Sarraut's opinion that most of the population was not responsible for the Hanoi crime and praised the Governor's intent to continue with a liberal policy. He states that events proved that Sarraut was right in this policy, as evidenced by the internal quiet in Annam since the bombing, and by statements of loyalty from the Notables and the Consultative Chamber of Tonkin. But, he asks, how must we interpret this loyalty? Are there different degrees? The Annamite "ne demande qu'a rester fidele et soumis à un protecteur qui le traitera humainement et cherchera à améliorer sa situation matérielle et morale." This, he advanced, was necessary and sufficient. He advised conserving the village organization as the basis of society, but curbing the power of the Notables; he advocated using the lettrés in the administration. "Until this class subordinates itself to the general interest and realizes that economic and social evolution must precede complete liberation of the individual vis-à-vis the community, our measures will seem tyrannical, even if they have the approval of the reformists." These latter are seen as not truly representative of the people.

He also recommends not giving too much credence to those less well advised who keep their aspirations on a political level only. We must nevertheless, he says, keep aware of what they think. Let time do its work. "La France est assez solidement établie en Indochine; elle peut dire en toute sécurité comme en toute douceur: J'y suis, j'y reste."

The smug tone of this commentator should not mask the fact that he made some very astute observations about the character of the nationalist leaders. Their failure to understand the importance of social and economic changes not only increased their hatred of the French, but weakened their own strictly politically oriented movement. They were never able to appeal to the masses with their program, which aimed primarily at education and political reforms, so in fact they represented the educated and new bourgeois elements of the society, rather than the nation as a whole. They never sensed to the end the necessity of turning to the peasantry for support in their national cause.

The war years were characterized by testimonials to the loyalty of the Annamites. In January-April 1915, however, AF called attention to German inroads in the nationalist movement. A correspondent from Hong Kong advised the editors that the material situation of Indochina seemed from reports to be brilliant;



if any trouble were to occur, it would be on the part of the revolutionaries. He reported that they had been much influenced by the tactics of the Kuomintang and had been aided by the Chinese until Yuan Shi-kai came to power. Chau's group then found a new banker in the Germans. From 1912 on, certain suspect Annamites could be found in German schools in Canton, and in 1914 Cuong De had made a trip to Berlin to seek funds. The author estimated that the Germans had given over 500,000 francs to the revolutionaries. However, he opined that they had not succeeded in making any important progress in sabotaging France's war effort.

It was a full year later, January-March 1916, that the next reference to the Indochinese occurred. It was noted that the Japanese entry into the war and the victory at Tsingtao negated German efforts to get the revolutionaries to organize local revolts against the French. Sporadic incidents did occur, but they were not based on, nor did they arouse, any mass sympathy. Vietnamese revolutionaries, numbering barely several hundreds, existed on foreign handouts, and seemed powerless to interest even their own class, much less the peasants, in their program of revolt and destruction. Some joined pirate bands, but most exiled themselves in Siam while waiting for a favorable moment for their plans.

In June 1916 AF chronicled that news had been rare from Indochina since the outbreak of the war, but that this largely reflected a tranquil internal situation. Some outbreaks had occurred, which AF attributed to German influence. In May however, Duy Tan, the youthful Annamite king, was involved in an abortive semicomical plot, resulting in his being deposed and exiled. His unsuccessful cohorts were some of the old monarchists. AF did not take the episode very seriously and revealed injured pride at having been deceived by the young man, rather than anything else.

The next mention of the internal situation of the colony was in 1920. From this year until 1925 occasional news items in the monthly review highlighted the growth of nationalist ideals in all the states. Only two incidents involving violence are reported: a plot in Tonkin in late 1920, similar to the bomb plot of 1913, and an assassination attempt against the reactionary Governor-General Merlin when he was visiting Canton. AF also noted in January 1922 the growth of national sentiment when it reported that the Tonkinese Consultative Chamber had received a request to create several new national holidays, celebrating the birthdays of Gia Long, the great emperor, and other national heroes. The writer found this very important in that it reflected the beginning of patriotic sentiment which transcended village affairs.

This five-year period was most marked, however, by the increase of Bolshevik or Communist propaganda and influence. As early as September 1921, AF attributed anticapitalist tendencies in a native newspaper to Bolshevik influence. The author added that at this point Bolshevism had not made much progress in Indochina. He discounted the influence of the malcontents who propagandized only in writings and disdained the indigent masses, calling them dangerous only in their own milieu. He believed the French could mitigate their effect by granting reforms. By 1924, however, the frequency of reports of Communist activities indicated a new character for the nationalist resistance movement. The name of Phan Boi Chau was heard only once more, in April 1926, when it was reported that after a series of student demonstrations and a violent press campaign, his new death sentence was commuted to lifelong house arrest. The death of Phan Chau Trinh the following year effectively removed the second of the old nationalist leaders, and closed the first chapter of Vietnamese resistance, clearing the way for the second generation.

The ultimate contribution of AF to an understanding of the nationalist movement should not be evaluated in terms of the extent to which it turned up all the facts modern historical study has revealed. Vietnam had the most primitive communications facilities at the beginning of the century, which made reporting difficult. More importantly, it is obvious that a contemporary reporter in an alien culture cannot possibly uncover all the facts about an illegal underground movement.

French censorship prevented the appearance of a free, local newspaper which could adequately express indigenous opinion. The Indochinese press, run by French colonials, was ultra-conservative and uniformly denounced anything that smacked of local self-improvement or independent activity. In view of the paucity of articulate Vietnamese writings for the period or relatively unbiased news accounts, AF appears a useful original source of moderate French outlook.

Many of its accounts have not turned up in any other literature and add a sense of color which makes the period much more alive than the few pages devoted to it in most histories would indicate. Its analysis of the shortcomings of the early nationalist leadership, and its contemporary ability to place their movement in the historical perspective of European-Asian tensions have been borne out by the work of subsequent students.

AF was ordinarily just in its criticism of the French administration and fairly perspicacious in pointing out danger signals.

In relation to the security of the colony, the journal in retrospect seemed to have an exaggerated fear of Chinese potential, as shown by the preponderance of articles on developments in that country. This is understandable in light of the fact that the French held Indochina for many years before they ceased thinking of their colony primarily in terms of an entry into the south of China. But this was a preoccupation which they shared with their 19th-Century rival, England, for control of the whole peninsula. Only later did they begin to plan for Indochina's own development.

The picture which emerges from AF of the early nationalist movement is relatively complete in that it transmits the currents of ideas, the basic personalities, and significance of the movement. If French policy-makers had conscientiously read it, and followed its suggestions, the political and social history of Vietnam might have been considerably different.

### Footnotes

1. See T.E. Ennis, French Policy and Developments in Indochina (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), pp. 72-77, for an outline of this complicated system.

2. Reprinted in Asia, Vol. I, No. 1, Saigon, March 1951.

3. French Indochina (New York, 1937), p. 399.

4. French Indochina, p. 479.

5. Le Viet-Nam (Paris: Les Editions de Minuet, 1955), p. 390.

French Rule and Vietnamese Struggles From  
the Mid-1920s through World War II

by

Frank N. Trager

The preceding section closes with the end of a first generation of nationalists. Phan Chau Trinh, who placed such great emphasis on education, returned to Vietnam in June 1925 and died the following March. Phan Boi Chau, who supported a revised and reformed monarchy represented in the person of Prince Cuong De, was arrested in June 1925 by the French police in the French concession at Shanghai and imprisoned for life in Hué. Their efforts were in the main devoted to the restoration of a modernized and independent monarchy or to reforms within the French regime. Moderate elements, influenced in part by the kind of thinking expressed in Asie Française and illustrated perhaps by Phan Chau Trinh, did in fact form a Constitutionalist Party in 1923 to work toward transforming the colonial councils into legislative bodies. These elements, particularly in Cochinchina, led by Bui Quang Chieu, a professor, and Nguyen Phan Long, a lawyer and former civil servant, achieved a measure of success. They had become members of a prosperous middle and professional class through cooperation with the French and had elected a bloc of candidates to the Saigon Council in 1925 but failed to achieve any lasting reforms. Later in the 1930s there seemed to be some promise in again pushing constitutional reforms, but again they were disappointed. Their party dissolved before World War II, some of its members joining the Cao Dai Sect, others the various revolutionary movements for independence.

It is not without interest that Bao Dai succeeded to his father's throne at Hué in 1925 but continued his education in France, fulfilling a request of his father, until he returned to Annam in 1932. He then pursued a reform policy, appointing Ngo Dinh Diem as Minister of the Interior and head of a commission to reorganize the government on a more democratic basis. The French and the conservative mandarinat at Hué thwarted his

policies. Diem resigned in protest, but Bao Dai went on to his eventual humiliation.

The disciples of Phan Boi Chau moved in another direction. They in 1925 reorganized to seek independence for Vietnam without the monarchy or the mandarin state. "Republican principles" and Marxist groups now appeared on the scene. For in the period after World War I and the Russian Revolution, Vietnamese youth were exposed to the winds of doctrine which flowed both from the Chinese Republic and from Moscow.

From this time forward--the mid-1920s--there evolved in Vietnam two fundamental, partly underground, revolutionary tendencies which under one name or another occasionally unite, but more often contest for leadership against the French. These two tendencies are today embodied in the Communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN) and the nationalist anti-Communist Republic of Vietnam (RVN).

In 1927 the nationalists were organized under the name of Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD), the Vietnam National (or Nationalist) Party. It has been well called the most significant non-Communist revolutionary nationalist organization. It was modeled on the Kuomintang and frequently supported by it. The Communists, under one name or another, such as the Vietnam Revolutionary League or Party or Youth League (Viet Nam Cach Menh Dong Chi Hoi) or the Indochinese Communist Party (1929) were led almost from the beginning by Ho Chi Minh and were recognized as a proper section of the Comintern in 1930.

These two forces, the nationalists (various groups) and the Communists (orthodox and Trotskyist groups) occasionally cooperated in uneasy united fronts, depending upon the current shifts of Kuomintang and Comintern policies. What I have elsewhere called the nationalist-Marxist amalgam runs through the Vietnamese anti-French struggle from the mid-1920s to the beginnings of the Franco-Vietnamese war of 1946-1954. To disentangle the extremely fissiparous groups and their leaders is a first requirement for an understanding of the period, but a requirement extremely difficult to fulfill. No anticolonial struggle in Southeast Asia is as disorganized as that of Vietnam. This disentanglement has already been done by competent authorities, however, and need not be repeated here.\*

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\*The interested reader may if he wishes follow their disputes and their migrations in I. Milton Sacks, "Marxism in Viet Nam" in Marxism in Southeast Asia, edited and co-authored by Frank N. Trager, Stanford University Press, 1959.

The VNQDD publicly based their operations on a publishing business in Hanoi and clandestinely enrolled and trained their members for revolutionary action against the French authorities. The French Security police--a most efficient organization between the wars--discovered and arrested some of the members in 1929 following an assassination of a French labor-recruiter. This in turn led to plans for an uprising which was to join with nationalist-oriented Vietnamese troops in the French army stationed at Lac Kay. A date was set for the insurrection, probably by its young student-leader, Nguyen Thai Hoc. Agreement on the timing of the event, scheduled for February 10, 1930, caused confusion in the execution of the plans. A mutiny of Vietnamese soldiers against their French officers took place on that night at Yen Bay. Other attacks followed in Phu Tho and Hai Duong provinces; bombing occurred in Hanoi. The French police and armed forces quickly suppressed the mutineers and arrested and executed Hoc and others charged with complicity in the insurrection. The remnants of the VNQDD fled to Canton and Yunnan. Activity of the party within Indochina seems to have been completely halted by 1932. However, the émigrés to China formed sections of the Vietnam Nationalist Party both at Canton and Yunnan. Out of these and related efforts came the wartime and postwar VNQDD and Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang, the Great Vietnam Nationalist Party. The VNQDD and the Dai Viet, together with the Vietnam Restoration League (Viet Nam Phuc Dong Minh Hoi), a group that still supported the monarchical pretender resident in Japan, Prince Cuong De, made up a nationalist anti-Communist coalition--the Vietnam Revolutionary League or the League of Vietnamese Revolutionary Parties (Viet Nam Cach Menh Dong Minh Hoi). Ho Chi Minh came to terms with them for seats in the December 1945-January 1946 "elections" and meeting of the postwar National Assembly of the DRVN.

The Yen Bay nationalist uprising in early 1930 was followed by a Communist effort in September. The Vietnam Communist Party, with headquarters at Haiphong, organized a series of demonstrations and strikes, sacked public buildings, and with some 6,000 peasants marched on Vinh. Two "Soviets" were set up in nearby areas. Landlords were killed and their estates in Ha Tinh and Nghe An provinces divided. The Communists were then operating under the "hard line" revolutionary policy enunciated by the Sixth Comintern Congress of 1928.

The French responded vigorously. Fully armed French troops, planes, and first-class military material were used to quell the uprising. Civilian casualties numbering 10,000 have been reported and another 10,000 were arrested and confined to penal islands and other prisons. French security police penetrated the Communist cadres and wrecked their organization. Ho Chi Minh was



arrested with the aid of the British police and tried in Hong Kong. He was subsequently allowed to leave the colony and for a time disappeared.

The next few years were relatively quiet. Nationalist and Communist activity shifted from Tonkin (Hanoi) to Cochinchina (Saigon). The Indochinese Communist Party, operating underground, was in 1933 part of a united front with the Trotskyists in the municipal elections of Saigon, where they succeeded in electing two members of their Struggle group (La Lutte--both a publication in French and an organization). This group also formed above-ground rural societies and an Indochinese Democratic Front. In the Saigon Council elections of 1937 La Lutte group elected Tran Van Giau and one other Stalinist, and Ta Thu Thau, the Cochinese leader of the Fourth International. Once again, just after the war had started, Tran Van Giau organized a rising in the delta, on November 22, 1940. And once again French fully armed troops and aircraft crushed the Communists in a two-week action. Earlier, in September 1939, the French successfully squelched the Trotskyist faction by a series of raids and mass arrests.

Then came the period of the war. The French Communist Party in 1939 followed the Nazi-Soviet Pact policy and refused to support the war effort. Communists in Indochina were jailed wherever possible. The French in the colony, some 40,000, were unwilling to make any concessions to bona fide Vietnamese nationalists even in the face of Japanese armed forces poised in China and known to have designs on Indochina. By agreement with the French, Japanese troops moved into Indochina in September 1940.

Vichy France in 1940, through Petain and Admiral Decoux in Vietnam, made its peace with Japan. In return for Japanese recognition of French sovereignty over Indochina, the Japanese were given air bases in Tonkin, the right to garrison there with troops and other troop transit rights. Vietnam's ports on the China Sea were to prove of immense strategic advantage for the Japanese attack on British and Allied shipping. From bases in Vietnam the Japanese bombed and sank the Repulse and Prince of Wales and initiated their invasion of Thailand, Burma, and Malaya. All Vietnamese nationalists and Communists (after 1941) were suppressed or imprisoned or otherwise subject to punishment if found. Only in China did they find refuge.

Vichy France and Decoux lasted from September 1940 to March 1945--a nasty, cowardly episode. In 1945 the Japanese decided to rid themselves of their French puppets and, choosing between Prince Cuong De, the royal exile in Japan, and Bao Dai, emperor of Annam at Hue, selected the latter. Bao Dai was emperor of

Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina from March 1945 until his abdication in August following the surrender of the Japanese and the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam at Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. Bao Dai promised to serve the DRVN, considering it a nationalist Vietnamese government! Bao Dai as a Japanese puppet could do nothing, though he tried to enlist various nationalists, among them Ngo Dinh Diem, who was still in retirement. Diem refused. In the meantime the Viet Nam Doc Lap Don Minh Hoi, the Vietnam Independence League, which came to be known as the Viet Minh, had been organized as a Communist-dominated front in China as far back as 1941. Under the leadership of the revolutionary who had by then adopted the alias Ho Chi Minh (he who enlightens) and had been freed in 1942 from a Chinese prison, this group operated from China. They offered to supply intelligence and to fight against Vichy and the Japanese, and received support from the United States and its allies. The Chinese Kuomintang was not unwilling to accept their aid because of old grievances against France and, of course, against Japan. But the Kuomintang, probably also distrustful of Ho, helped to organize a second group of Vietnamese as the Vietnamese Revolutionary League. The Viet Minh thereupon joined the Vietnamese Revolutionary League in a broad coalition front against Vichy and Japan. Ho and Vo Nguyen Giap, who learned his guerrilla ways in Yenan, became its political and military leaders when the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed in August 1945.

The Chinese under Chiang had helped to sponsor the Viet Minh and in part controlled the country down to the 16th parallel. The British, as part of the Potsdam Conference agreement, were to assist the French below this demarcation point. The Chinese and the Anglo-French forces were to disarm the Japanese and restore law and order. This military assignment was converted into a political one.

The Viet Minh had established a kind of regime in Hanoi. They, and to a lesser extent the Chinese, did not want the French back. France, of course, had other ideas. Vietnamese nationalists in the north and in the south were decidedly against the French. They had scorned French Radio Saigon wartime propaganda --all Vichyite. They had been beaten, suppressed, and imprisoned by Vichy troops during the war when they sought to form any kind of resistance movement against the Japanese and the Vichyites, so, when the Japanese collapse came in August 1945 they aspired to genuine national freedom.

This was denied them. Fresh French troops supported by the British began to arrive in September. Saigon was retaken. In the north, however, the Chinese refused to admit the French until

the end of February 1946, by which time they had wrung concessions from them but had also enabled the Viet Minh to further entrench itself as the government of Vietnam in Hanoi.

In March 1946 the French agreed to recognize the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (the north) as a free state within the Indochinese Federation and the newly formed French Union. A referendum was to decide whether the south (Annam and Cochinchina) were to join this Vietnamese free state.

Several conferences between the Viet Minh and the French were then held, presumably to carry out the March 6, 1946, agreement: one at Dalat in April, another at Fontainebleau in July, another at Dalat which included representatives of Laos, Cambodia, and southern Vietnam but not the north, and so forth. It soon appeared that the French had no real intention of carrying out the referendum agreed upon in March, which undoubtedly at that time would have joined the two parts of Vietnam. In the meantime hostilities continued. These led to a new cease-fire, the modus vivendi of September 1946.

As it turned out, the latter was not worth the paper on which it was written. Clashes continued. On November 23 the French bombed Haiphong, and on December 19 the Vietnamese of the north responded with attacks on French forts in Tonkin and Annam. The war began which was to end--for a time--with the partition at the 17th parallel in 1954.

General Observations on French Counterinsurgency  
Experience and Practice Prior to World War II

by

Frank N. Trager

On the whole, it may be said that the native problem in Indo-China is not really serious. There is little of the open secession that is so obvious in Russia or of the passive hate that characterizes Algeria. In Indo-China the general reveil movement of Asiatic Powers naturally finds an echo, but it is difficult to make rebels of a prosperous peasantry.\*

One year after Roberts made his bold prediction four companies of Vietnamese troops mutinied at Yen Bay. The soldiers killed their French officers and vainly attempted to free Vietnam from foreign control. The Yen Bay uprising was only a minor mutiny--one of the many indicated in the preceding pages; but it was also a small outward sign of the general discontent with French rule. The prosperity that Roberts mentioned was not enough to lull the proud remnants of a 1,000-year-old civilization into passive submission. Nor did that prosperity reach the masses of the rural inhabitants or urban workers.

Economic motivation played a part, but not the largest part in fomenting discontent and developing it into conflict. The Communists, eventually successful in North Vietnam, had in addition to purely local Vietnamese grievances--on which of course they could build--a theory and practice of warfare. In this instance, the French regime fulfilled the theory and became the target for the practice.

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\*Stephen H. Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy (1870-1925) (London: King and Son, 1929), p. 478.

There is no reason, however, here in the time-frame before World War II to consider Communist theory and practice of warfare. For what was then at stake essentially in Vietnam was a patriotic anticolonial struggle which could and did enlist bona fide nationalists as patriots of Vietnam. The Communists added a dimension to this struggle which in post-World War II days aroused misguided sympathy for the reimposition of French colonial rule.

The major fact to emerge from these pages is that Vietnamese, monarchical, mandarin, authoritarian, reformist, republican, constitutionalist, or revolutionist wanted to be rid of an alien master who happened to be French between the 1850s and the 1950s. The idea of a national Viet State, spreading down the reaches of the peninsula, emerged slowly and episodically. At various times in history the whole of Vietnam had been united as one unit under a dynastic empire, but, at many other times, this empire had been fragmented by revolts in different provinces. The ties holding Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina together were frequently tenuous, and they did not provide a strong historical base for a united nationalistic movement until the cement of protest brought them together.

The French were aware of the dissonances among the sections of Vietnam, and during the early years of their rule they believed they were completely safe from a general uprising. "There is nothing in common between the various peoples, or their ideas or methods. There is no native public opinion, there probably never will be one. Thus a general rising is not possible," said Roberts,\* and the French believed this. The French overlooked the ties that did bind the Vietnamese peoples together; they could never quite understand the community of grievances common to the Indochinese states and peoples. They also could never really act out their roles as exponents and practitioners of libertarian, revolutionary ideas which presumably were embraced in their "mission."

The Vietnamese, for their part, essayed what may be called romantic rebellion--a looking backward to a past which they attempted to restore--and in the 1920s tried to reform the French-dominated, French-controlled governments of the Indochinese protectorates. The more far-sighted members of the educated or middle class recognized that the progress of their people was shackled by the archaic system of government that the French

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\*In the work mentioned above, p. 429.

were committed to perpetuate. These middle-class leaders saw the lack of scientific and technical knowledge among their people as the other major block to independence. Their requests were for the most part modest, and they carried out their activities in the open.

However, as Donald Lancaster and others have pointed out, the French were not prepared to loosen, in any significant manner, their hold on their colony. All Vietnamese attempts at reform were met by the activities of the French Security Service. This force was supported in its activities by the reactionary French community in the colony. The Security Service was responsible for the protection of all French interests in the colony. To fulfill this function they restricted travel by the indigenes within the colony and abroad. They made searches without warrants, and they could detain a local person for up to ten years without a trial. To battle the nationalist movement the force adopted additional tactics. The Security Service fomented regional and personal rivalries to break the unity of the nationalist front, and often applied pressure and threats in the cases of individuals who were isolated by the travel restrictions and therefore unable effectively to resist.

The frustrations caused by police harassment of overt attempts to reform the system of government eventually forced the nationalists to go underground and engage in conspiratorial agitation, which of course were suppressed when discovered.

But such an account--that is, of the role of the Security Police in effective suppression of dissent, dissidence, and conspiracy--is a partial account. French policy early and late envisioned these territories as provinces to be ruled and controlled by the French. The Security Police was an instrument always backed by military power which the Vietnamese in the pre-World War II period did not and could not equal. As far back as 1891 Governor-General de Lanessan arranged for the military policing of the Tonkin-Chinese frontier region. Each region was under the command of a colonel with both civil and military powers. Eventually Tonkin as a whole was composed of Five Military Territories and two Frontier Regions. Annam and the delta area were similarly plotted. Village police with regularized arms, pay, and uniforms were organized. Militia, a higher grade of service under French officers and NCOs, were assigned to fixed posts. Regular troops and the French Foreign Legion were used initially to guard the frontiers between the several states and between French Indochina and China. The "regulars" and the Legion were used as a reserve force.

By 1931 these three types of forces were supplemented by a Garde indigène operating in the protected states; a Garde civile in Cochinchina only; and by "partisans" in the north Tonkin areas. The Garde indigène was organized by brigades of average size, 150 men, with each brigade assigned to a province. The French provided their own hierarchy of ranks to the brigades. The Garde civile of Cochinchina replaced the former militia and was subordinated to the French cadre of the gendarmerie. The partisans of Tonkin were indigenous mobile and sedentary units serving as "trip-wire" border defense units. In various forms and under various names, these organizations have been largely retained up to the present.

The military command--usually under the command of a lieutenant general--had the following in 1931: 11 European infantry battalions, four of which were Foreign Legion; 18 battalions of indigenous riflemen (tirailleurs); 1 mixed battalion of riflemen and colonials; infantry (European); 7 artillery groups; various air formations; and service troops. These units were divided into two divisions and one independent brigade. The indigenes were confined to tirailleur units, mixed units, and service troops; they had barely begun to be promoted to NCO ranks. Total military strength in 1931 was one-third French and two-thirds local and was estimated at 800 officers, 9,000 NCOs and European troops, 18,000 other.

With nationalist political agitation carefully guarded or suppressed, nationalist military operations were easily liquidated by these French forces because nationalist--and Communist--military operations in the pre-World War II days were largely nonexistent or, if tried, poorly planned and executed on a highly episodic schedule. There was then no concerted theory and practice. The models for insurrection were 19th-Century ones of terror, assassination, individual acts of bomb-throwing and other forms of unsustained, uncoordinated violence and withdrawal, if one was to survive, to remote or foreign climes. Sympathetic though the Kuomintang was, provocative though the Japanese wanted to be, neither the Chinese nor the Japanese invested or seemingly thought to invest in training and providing for a Vietnamese guerrilla force.

All that remained, therefore, prior to World War II in Vietnam was what has been presented in these pages. The only lesson to be drawn is that of the vitality of something called nationalism, at least to the extent of opposing alien-imposed power. This is what the Vietnamese did during the French century in Vietnam. And this same force is what has apparently sustained the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) in its struggle against other



Vietnamese who wish to impose an alien-oriented dictatorship over Vietnam. The key phrase in this sequence is the struggle against alien power, no matter what its source.

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The French sources are, as to be expected, extraordinarily rich. The ten pages of small-type entries listed in the bibliography of Virginia Thompson, French Indo-China (New York: Macmillan, 1937), will provide the reader with a formidable listing.

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